

# One Degree Removed

*The last carnival of Venice*

by

Valeria Rivera Deneke

Bachelor of Science in Architecture  
University of Virginia, 2013

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on  
January 16, 2020 in partial fulfillment of the  
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## Abstract

Development, including urban and architectural, has been driven by the idea of progress aimed at economic and technological growth, which, in turn has been leaving waste in its wake. Waste has thus become the subjects of culture in the 21st century. Our daily life is supported by products that could be understood as waste on life-support, with expiration dates and packaging material that ensure a lengthy and repulsive death, leaving behind durable synthetic corpses. Products of our consumption tend to pile out of sight, contributing to cities and architectures of their own. The binary condition of masking our waste is essentially our embedded cultural flaw, whether through landfills or capped as parks, masking consciousness and ownership as well - our current unsustainable paradigm of growth.

Venice will be the first major city to drown because of climate change. It is a city in which experiences of culture, history and architecture are obsessively consumed by a population that vastly surpasses its own citizenry. I intervene in three physical and temporal scales, responding to this binary condition by manifesting its materiality, publicly - through choreography, celebration, and building. This is an alternative way to conceive architecture: Not in the service of progress but in the service of greater self-awareness. Without hoping for a wholesale utopian transformation but accepting various dimensions of our prospects. Each intervention is imagined for a city in which tourism drives the economy, and leaves waste in its wake - in a city caught in an unsustainable cycle of consumption. 1) The choreography of trash renders visible the geographical scale that comes with the displacement of waste through technological instruments and human labor. 2) The Carnival sets up a platform to reclaim the public ground, an orchestration of rising sea levels, time, and ownership. It recreates some of the city's most celebrated architecture as ephemera in an event that includes trash in all its inconvenient and uncomfortable presence overtime acclimates citizens to climate change. 3) Venice now, in the early 21st century produces waste above all else, this intervention updates the architectural "monument" to function as a beacon of our Anthropocene.

Thesis Supervisor: Ana Miljački  
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# Mentions

I would like to extend special thanks to

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Daisy & Olivier  
for your help in the final stretch

Each of you made this thesis come to life.



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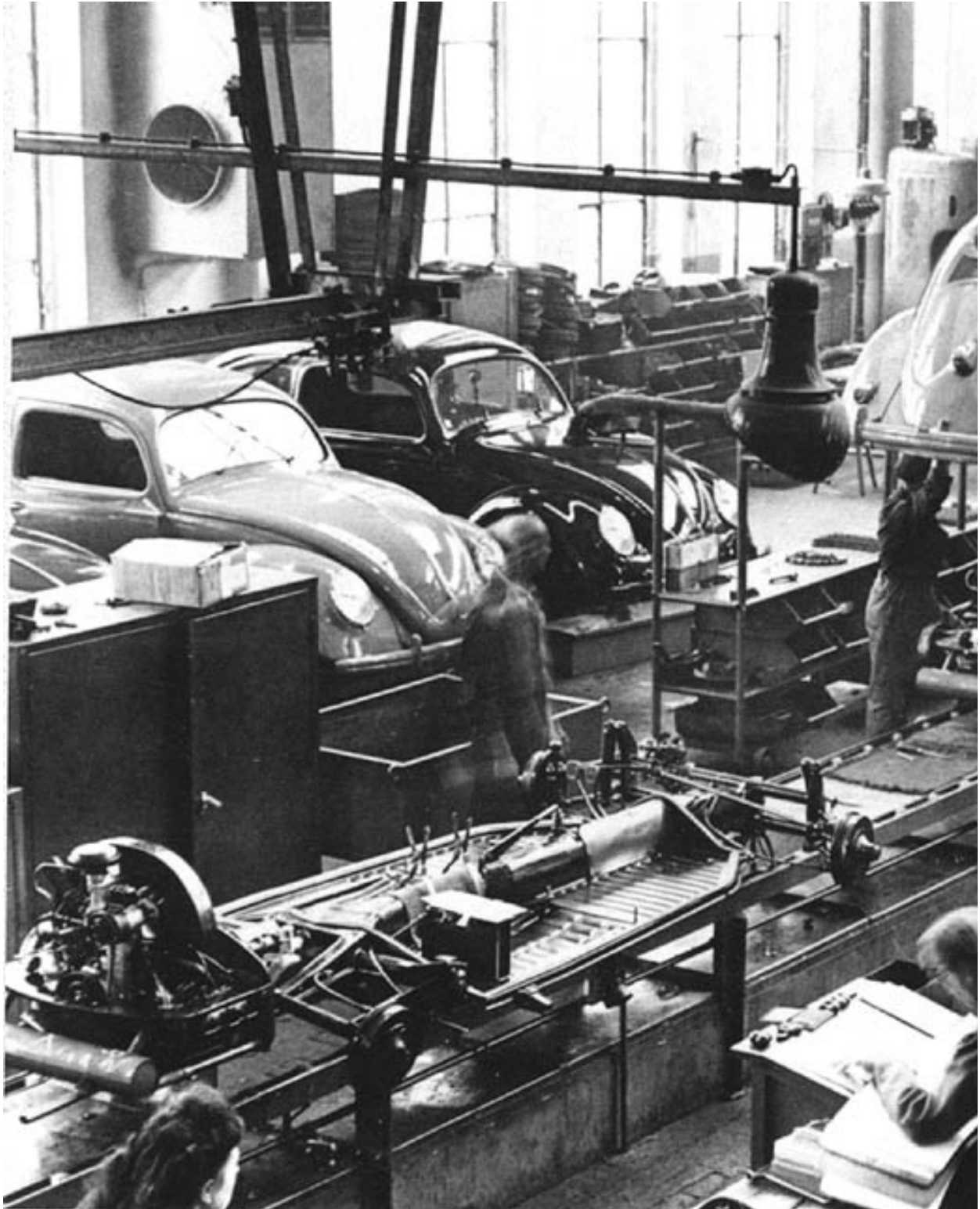
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# Introduction

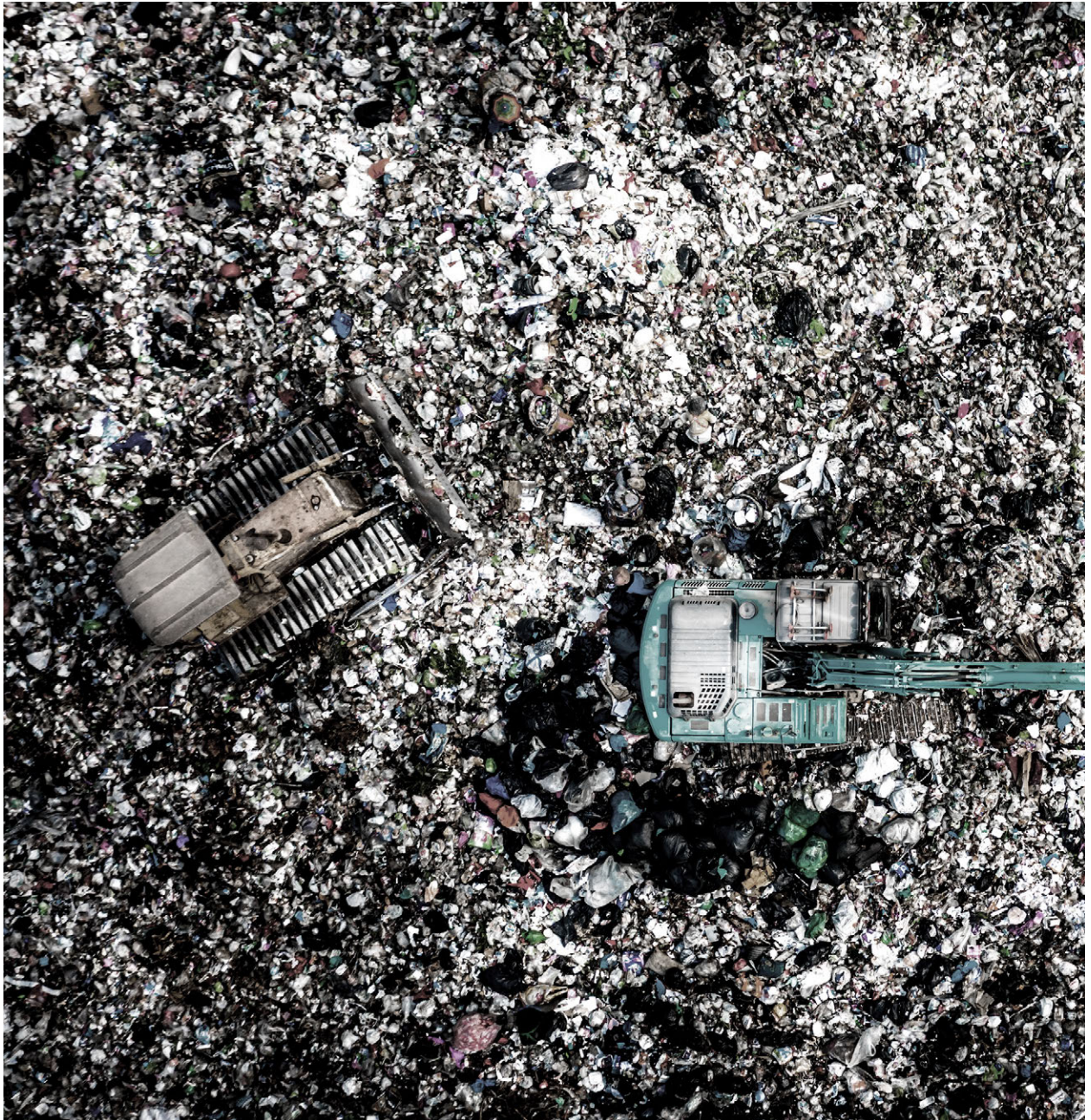
Development, including urban and architectural, has been driven by the idea of progress aimed at economic and technological growth, which, in turn has been leaving waste in its wake. Waste has thus become the subjects of culture in the 21st century. Our daily life is supported by products that could be understood as waste on life-support, with expiration dates and packaging material that ensure a lengthy and repulsive death, leaving behind durable synthetic corpses. Products of our consumption tend to pile out of sight, contributing to cities and architectures of their own. The binary condition of masking our waste is essentially our embedded cultural flaw, whether through landfills or capped as parks, masking consciousness and ownership as well - our current unsustainable paradigm of growth.





*Henry Ford's  
Beetle  
Assembly Line  
and Model T,  
circa 1908  
photo from  
© Graham  
Wheeler*









*Aerial view  
garbage  
trucks unload  
garbage to  
a landfill,  
original photo  
by Avigator  
Fortuner on ©  
Shutterstock*



## Freshkills, New York

Our consumption turnover is at a pace that has never been before, with a limited spotlight dictated by the next cultural trend. Living in a marketing playground, cravings have developed into needs; everything is justified to be used here and now. Our attention span has been reduced to a millisecond, leaving us making decisions in a fight-or-flight manner, with no room to even consider the consequences. However, the consequences do exist, build up, and have been paving their way into our present [and future].

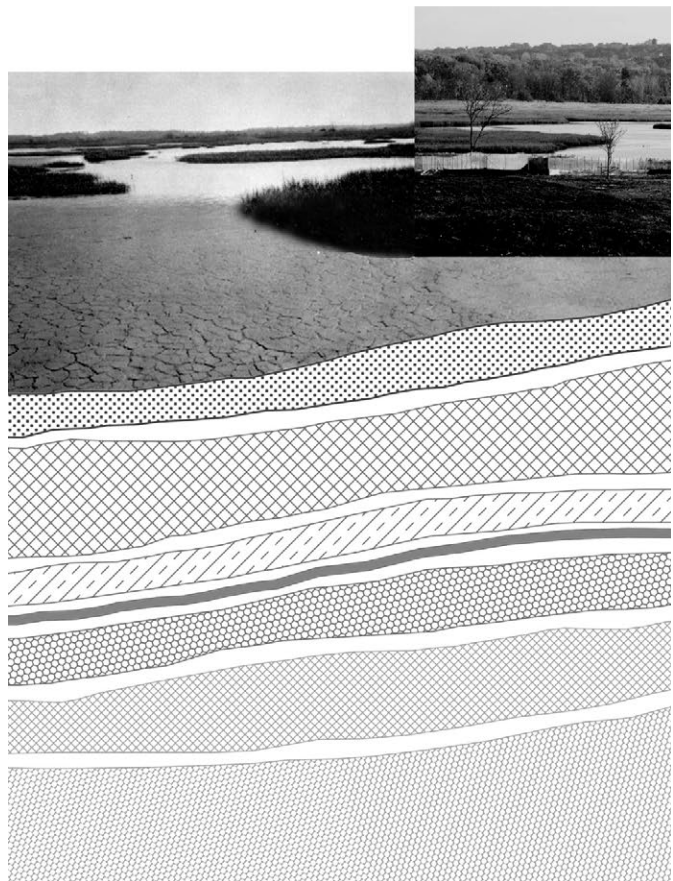
Freshkills is physical evidence of the reality we have created in our modern way of living. It is the back-end of a cultural problem - the substance of our contemporary morality as John May would define. Given our current political climate, where global warming has been described as non-existent, projects like Freshkills serve as evidence that it is and we are responsible for it. With a daily emission of 30 million cubic feet of methane gas to the atmosphere and a torrent of toxic leachate being held by a 20-year lifespan diaper, both events are deadly and volatile, each on their own. Yet this reality is not embedded in our cultural knowledge, we instead want to believe the made-up fantasy of a new park opening up in New York, when in reality, it is a 2,200-acre masked toxicity that served as the backbone of New York's waste for 53 years. Its half century of [waste] accumulation has left a physical imprint on the environment, requiring much more than two-foot soil cover and a 'diaper' to offer a different reality, let alone a new park. We have manufactured this reality, yet our perception or awareness is nowhere near grasping the real consequences that lie ahead.

This case study seeks to place the problem at the forefront, and expose the systemic nature of our cultural problem, tying numerous factors and players into an irreversible chain-effect. Therefore raising awareness of our current unsustainable paradigm of growth, which has to come to an end. Otherwise, proving how silence is evidence of extreme uncertainty.

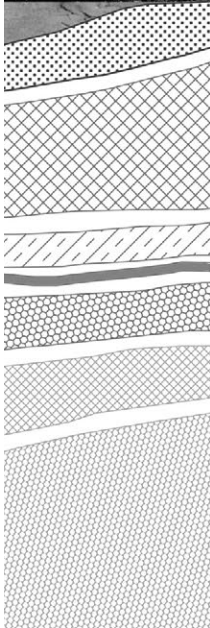


*"Increasingly, as happens with history, the two places are fused in my mind, existing only as shadows right now or as dreams I can't fully remember in a morning's half-sleep. Nightmares that I have willed away, or rich fantasies of control and comfort. The line of distinction is rapid and blurred. I'm no longer able to remember with any accuracy their outlines, where one image begins and the other ends, and so I'm left to recount what I can recall, unsure from which well my thoughts are drawn. I remember men and women in plastic jumpsuits, zippered and Velcroed, moonboots yellow against the topsoil. Each was feeling around, trying to understand, trying to imagine what kind of landscape this might become. Each trying to see clearly through the rising waves of methane off-gassing. Each a white figure, passing through an oil painting of nature, wandering through a memory of natural things still to come, a nature not quite ready to be breathed in, lived on, or felt, an Unsafe Nature."*

*-John May  
Bringing Back a Fresh Kill*







PLANTING SOIL

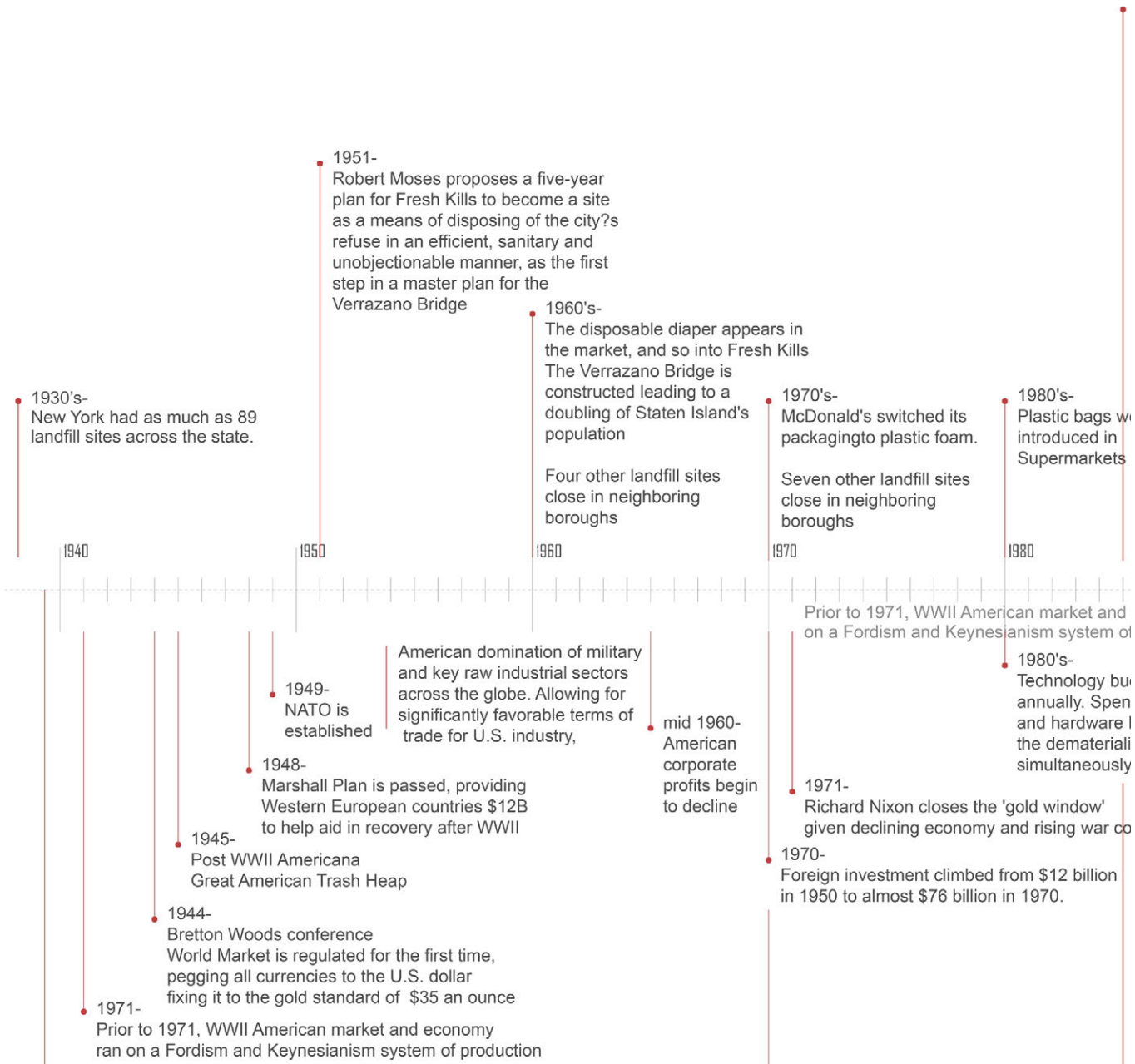
SANDY SOIL

DRAINAGE  
PLASTIC LINER

GAS VENT

MORE SOIL

TRASH



mid 1980's-  
Fresh Kills is the only landfill in New York

1987-  
The first single-use disposable camera appears in the market, and so in Fresh Kills.

Late 1980's-  
The pendulum began to shift back. The health care industry began re-sterilizing hospital equipment and using it again. The automobile industry, in order to cut costs, changed the way it packaged parts and began recycling. McDonald's went back to paper wrappers

1990's-  
Once a 2,200-acre, sea level wetland, turned into 2,200 acres of hills as high as 200-feet that buried nearly 30,000 tons of trash daily

1994-  
The first leachate plant is built and treats about 200,000 gallons of leachate a day.

2001-  
On March 22, after years of keeping New York's biggest secret, Fresh Kills finally closed,

On September 5, The City of New York announced the start of the International Design Competition

September 11, World Trade Center Terrorist Attack  
The next day Fresh Kills reopens to accept barges carrying the debris from the wreckage.

2011-  
Over the last decade that Fresh Kills has closed, the Dept of City Planning along with New York Department of State's Division of Coastal Resources has developed a 30-year master plan to regenerate the decommissioned landfill into NYC's largest park which will include five main areas that encompasses natural habitats for wildlife, the resurgence of the natural topography, programming for a variety of activities and circulation throughout the 2,200-acre expanse.

2012-  
Freshkills North Park Comfort Station and Pathway Construction to be completed by January 2020

are

economy ran  
f production

udgets of Wall Streets firms rose by 19%  
ding a combined \$7.5 billion in software  
y 1991 The sole function of which was  
zation of money. Money became an image,  
displayed everywhere, but existing nowhere.

sts





## A MASKED TOXICITY

Leachate is the liquid by-product of the breakdown of household waste. Once the final cover is placed on the landfill, the quantity of leachate produced diminishes considerably because the amount of water that comes in contact with waste is minimized. The goal of the leachate management system is to remove pollutants by containment, collection and treatment of leachate before it reenters the environment.









## Venice, Italy

Venice will be the first major city to drown because of climate change.



On November 12th, 2019,  
Venice experienced the second highest waves since 1966.





*Images are  
from article in  
The Guardian©  
posted on  
November 13,  
2019*







*Images are  
from article in  
The Guardian©  
posted on  
November 13,  
2019*







*Images are from article in The Guardian©  
posted on November 13, 2019*



*Images are from article in The Guardian©  
posted on November 13, 2019*









It is a city in which experiences of culture, history and architecture are obsessively consumed by a population that vastly surpasses its own citizenry.





*Images are from article in Domus©  
posted on November 19, 2019*





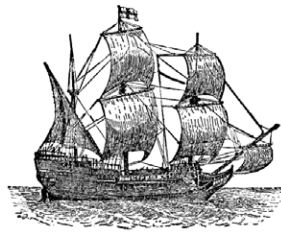
*Images are from article in Domus©  
posted on November 19, 2019*





# TRADE

tourism

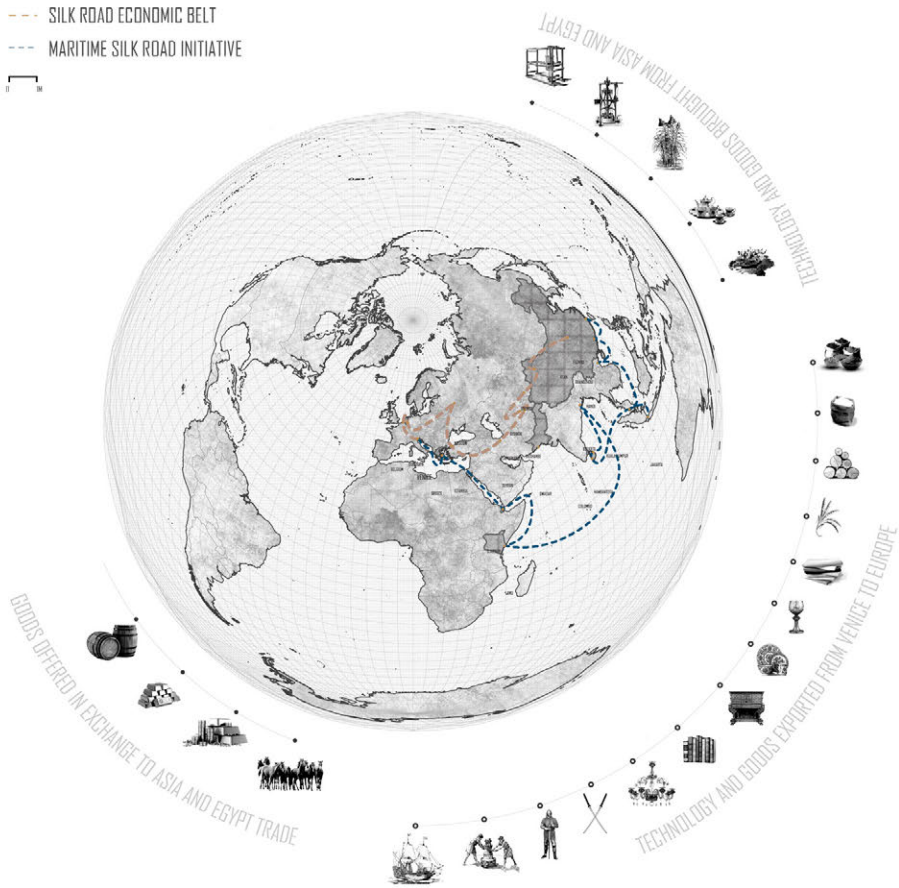


## Trade Routes: A Maritime Network

Since the Venetian Republic decided to be strongly linked to the Mediterranean Sea but not to the hinterland, Venice was married to the water and consequently to a network of seaports and trade routes - such as the silk route. This was the major factor involved in the rapid development of the city's maritime industries.

Therefore, Venice's geographic location strategically allowed the city to become a leading marker on the trading map as well as a leading industrial port since its early development. This has been a strength in terms of trade and global networking, but it has also opened up its doors to the rest of the world as well. Its porosity has allowed for numerous immigrants to come into the city.

--- SILK ROAD ECONOMIC BELT  
 --- MARITIME SILK ROAD INITIATIVE



ARTS, ACADEMIA & TRADE FAIRS  
 Gallerie dell' Accademia   Gran Teatro La Fenice   Collezione Peggy Guggenheim   Torre dell' Arsenale   US Pavilion Biennale

RELIGIOUS  
 Chiesa di San Rocco   Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari   Santa Maria della Salute   Basilica di San Marco   San Giorgio Maggiore





# TREES

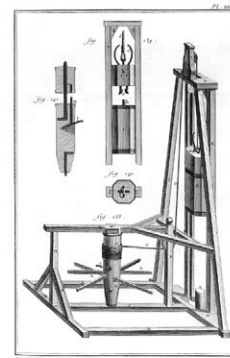
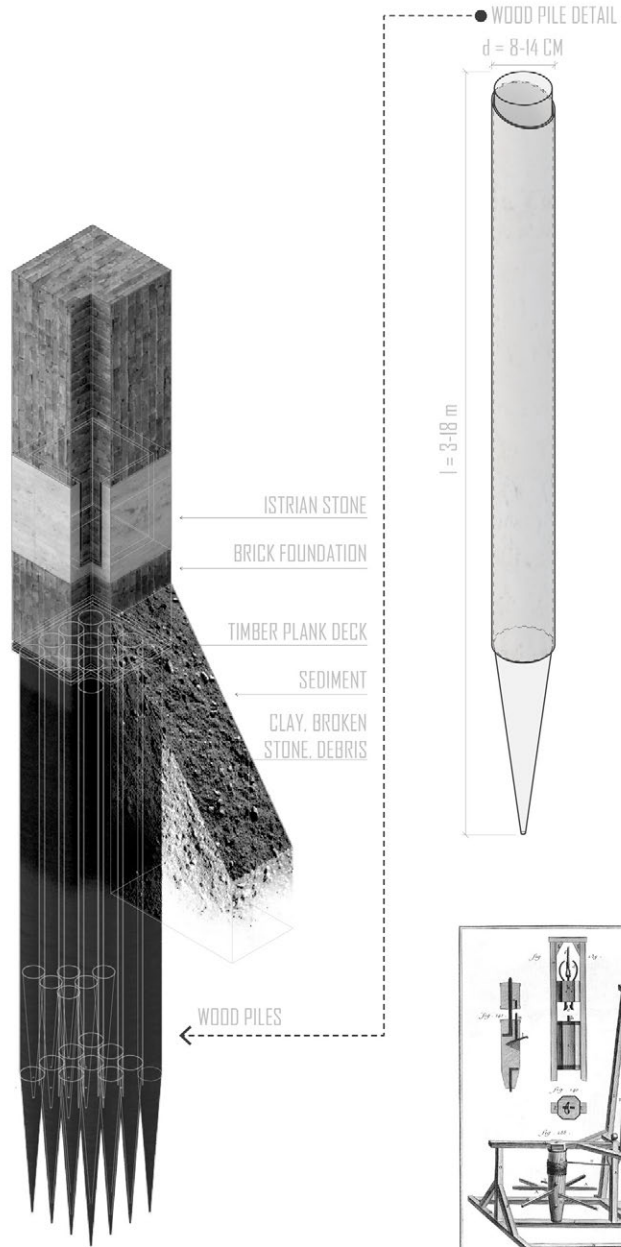
territory



Venice is often mistaken as an onymous, immaterial city. Since the early 19th century, its depiction in art and literature have transformed it into a pre-established imaginative experience, an idealized atmosphere, a metaphorical preconception. A fetish of melancholy arose because of its characteristic personified segment in history with literary qualities, enclosed and capsulated within an island. It is precisely the lack of boundaries that differentiates the idea of Venice—untouched by impurities of everyday life - from its economic structure, which is what truly defines its global urbanity.





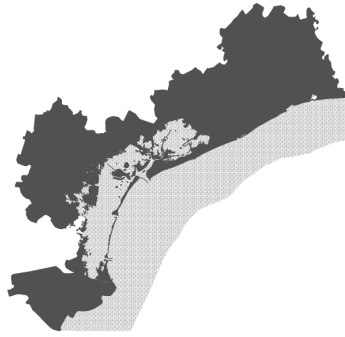


*Charpente, m. 111*



# WATER

catalyst



Venice has a unique amphibian condition. Sea level rise is an event that reclaims the public ground. It's an orchestration of water, time, and land ownership. Such that, if water fills up a space, does it mean it no longer belongs to the city, but to the ocean?

*"If we momentarily set aside the catastrophic nature of alluvial events, we can engage with the unusual image of urban form that they generate. The ever-more-frequently amphibious condition of Italian cities erases filters and spatial sequences, and redefines the articulation of the boundaries between interiors and exteriors, between the public and private realms. Water acts as a catalyst: it provides us with a detailed diagnosis of the current condition of the city.*

*While post-flood accounts and inventories of damage yield an accurate image of the ground floor's usage, the section plane of the water level redraws its architectural substance. Encountering both monuments and minor buildings, and both public spaces and more intimate ones, it abolishes hierarchies, elucidates formal richness, and reveals a palimpsest that must be completely rewritten."*

*Ground Floor Crisis (14th Venice Biennale of Architecture - 2014)*



# WASTE

infrastructure



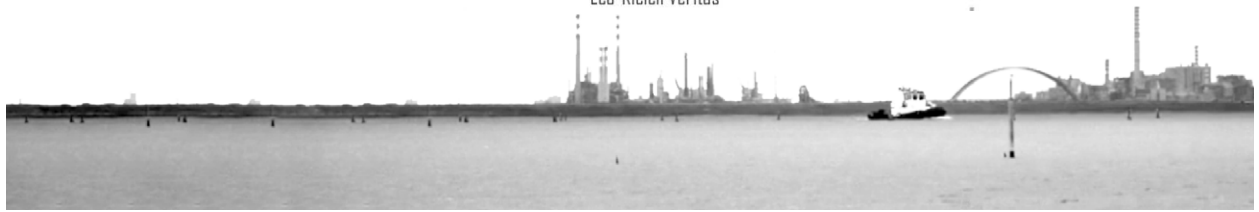
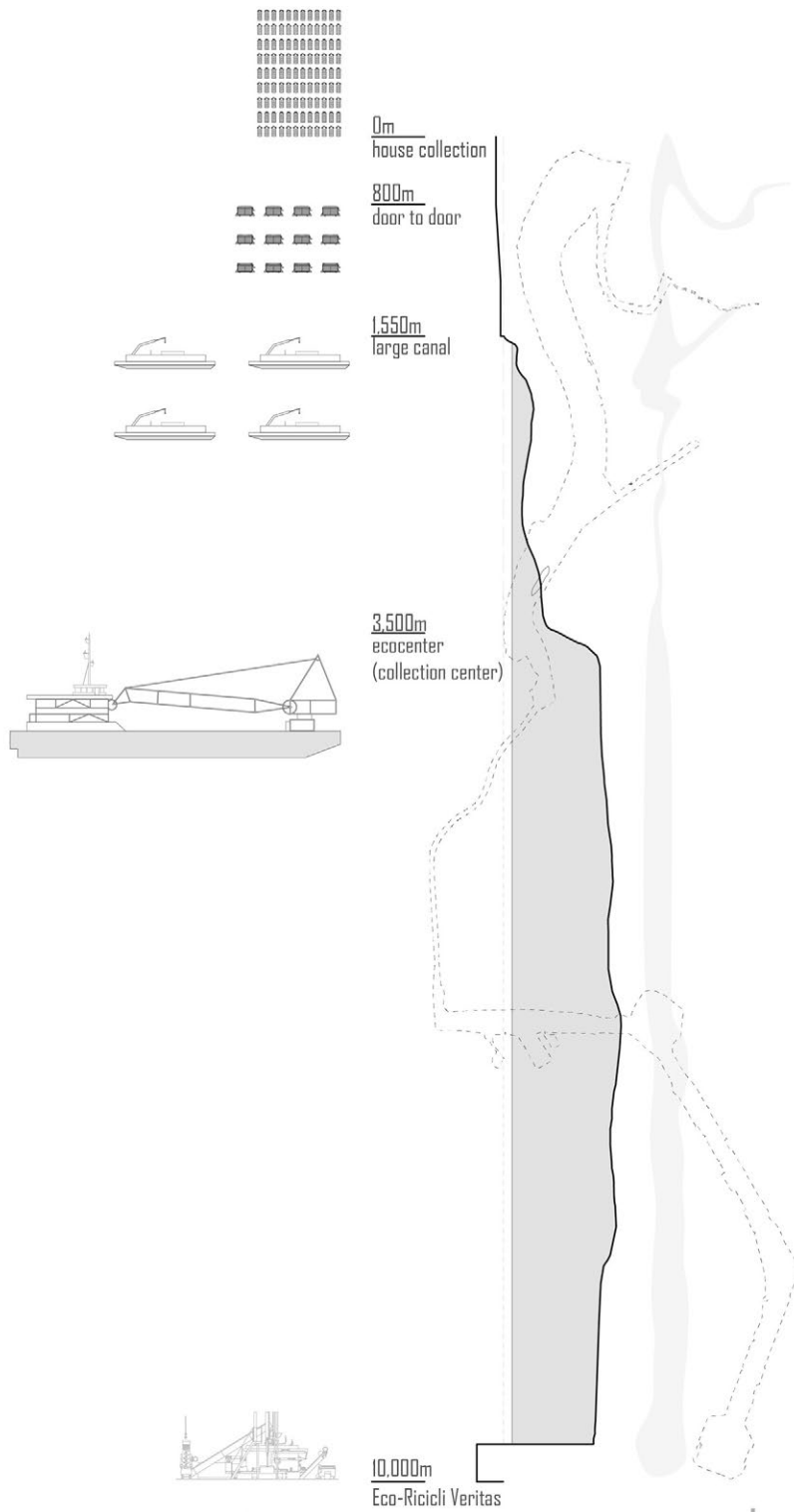
At the end of 2016, the City of Venice's in-house company, Veritas, began a new way of collecting waste: both door to door (from 8:30am to noon) and by allowing people to deliver the waste themselves to boats fitted with trash compactors available from 6.00-8.30am. This new system has now been implemented in about 99% of the historical centre.

Tourists or citizens who stay at home longer can wait for the garbage man to ring their bell. Prior to 2016, garbage was simply deposited outside on the street near front doors, causing unpleasant smells, litter and low quality separation of waste collection.

While 2011 studies show that the garbage produced per person in Veneto equals 1.30 kg/person, it shows a double, 2.6 kg/person in Historic Venice. Calculations based on these numbers reveal daily tourist garbage equals 75 tonnes, costing €123k for removal, daily. Summing up to €44.8 million a year.<sup>1</sup>



*1. Veritas, & Venezia, C. d.(2013). Tia e nuovo contratto di servizio di Venezia*



# MONUMENT

symbol

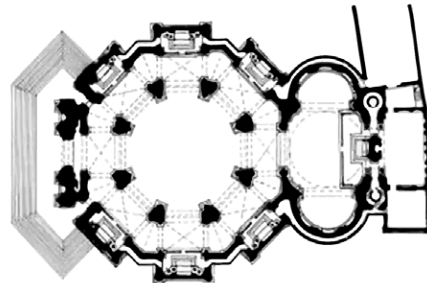
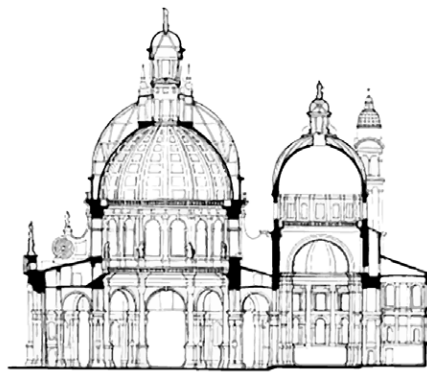
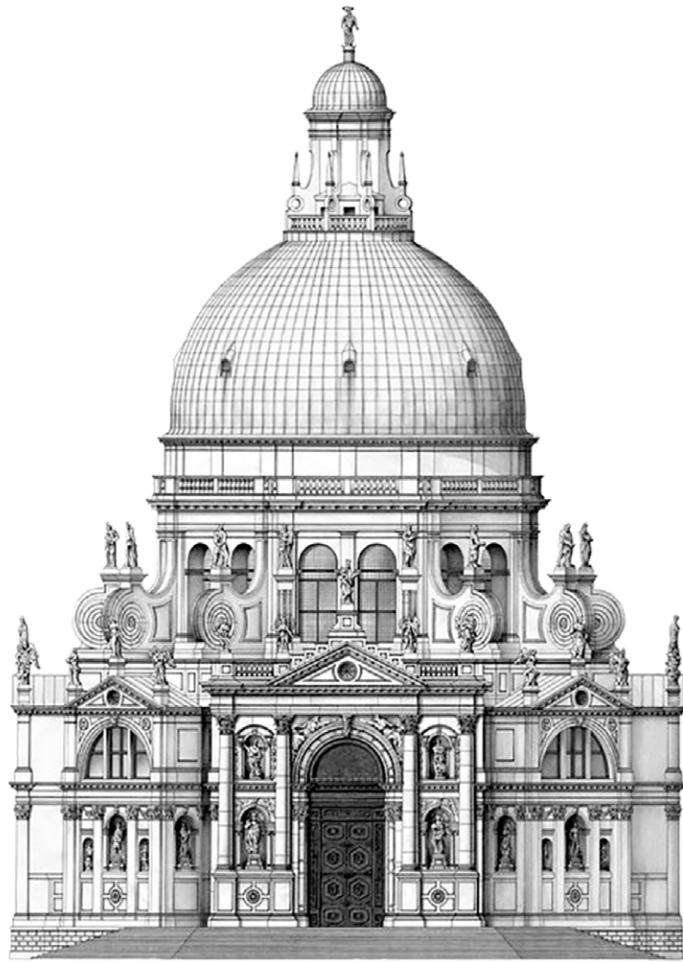


The term monumentality relates to the symbolic status and physical presence of a monument. In this context, German art historian Helmut Scharf states that *“A monument exists in the form of an object and also as symbol thereof. As a language symbol, a monument usually refers to something concrete, in some rare cases it is also used metaphorically [...]. A monument can be a language symbol for a unity of several monuments [...] or only for a single one, but in a broader sense it can also be used in nearly all knowable planes of being. [...] What is considered a monument always depends on the importance it attributes to the prevailing or traditional consciousness of a specific historical and social situation.”*

*“Monuments are human landmarks, which men have created as symbols for their ideals, for their aims, and for their actions. They are intended to outlive the period, which originated them, and constitute a heritage for future generations. As such, they form a link between the past and the future.”*

-Josep Luis Sert  
*Nine Points on Monumentality*









## Three Interventions

I intervene in three physical and temporal scales, responding to this binary condition by manifesting its materiality, publicly - through choreography, celebration, and building. This is an alternative way to conceive architecture: Not in the service of progress but in the service of greater self-awareness. Without hoping for a wholesale utopian transformation but accepting various dimensions of our prospects. Each intervention is imagined for a city in which tourism drives the economy, and leaves waste in its wake - in a city caught in an unsustainable cycle of consumption.

1) The choreography of trash renders visible the geographical scale that comes with the displacement of waste through technological instruments and human labor.

2) The Carnival sets up a platform to reclaim the public ground, an orchestration of rising sea levels, time, and ownership. It recreates some of the city's most celebrated architecture as ephemera in an event that includes trash in all its inconvenient and uncomfortable presence overtime acclimates citizens to climate change.

3) Venice now, in the early 21st century produces waste above all else, this intervention updates the architectural "monument" to function as a beacon of our Anthropocene.



# ‘Porta-a-Porta’

Prior to 2016, trash bags were simply placed outside in the street in historical Venice, near front doors, causing unpleasant smells, litter, and poor separation of waste collection. The growing tourist population in Venice is producing incremental amounts of waste in the city, an average of 75 tons, daily. From which the city is responsible for providing garbage removal services. Now Venice has a waste collection system which consists of a door-to-door assortment by people in carts through streets, which then gets consolidated to smaller boats through the canals, up until the embargo ship that transfers all waste to the collection plant in mainland Venice. While the new waste management in historical Venice is very successful considering its water-based infrastructure, it is normalized to the comparable transportation methods all Venetians and tourists use, and therefore remains timid and unnoticeable.

## Venezia Storica



*The Grand Canal being drained and cleaned, Venice, 1956*



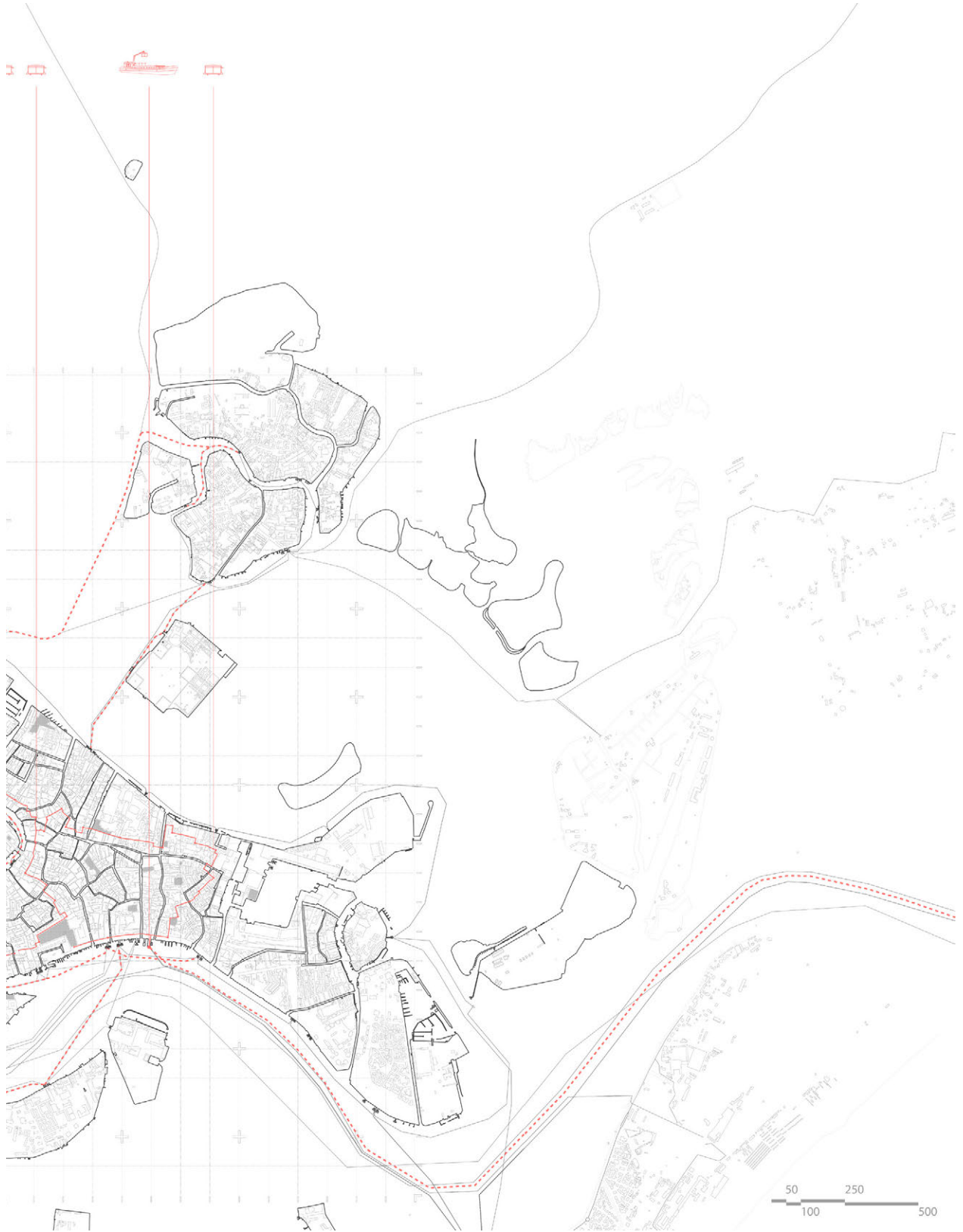




*Original image  
by Manuel  
Silvestri,  
October 29,  
2018.  
The Atlantic©*







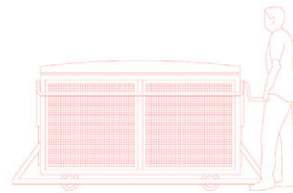


A



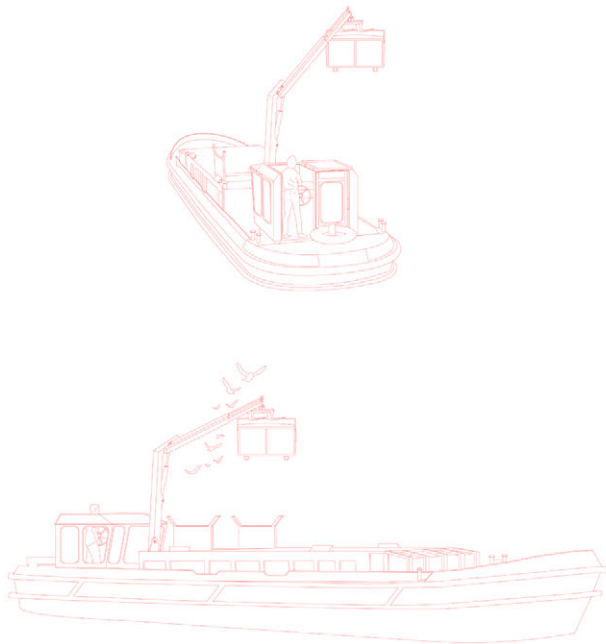
VOLUME CAPACITY 50-65 liters

B



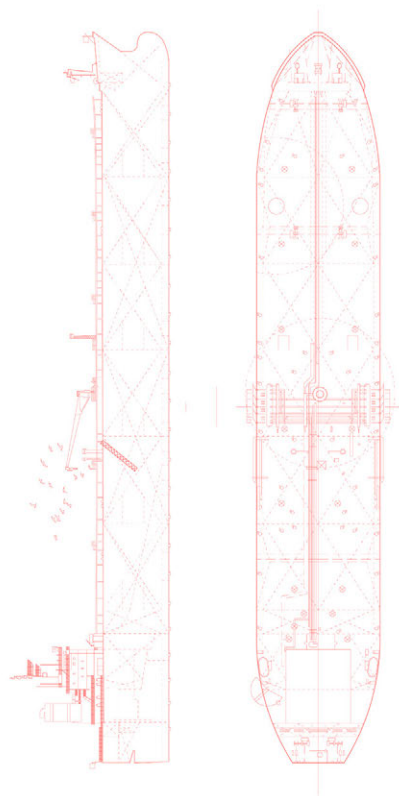
VOLUME CAPACITY 500-700 liters

C



VOLUME CAPACITY 6.000-8.000 liters

D



VOLUME CAPACITY 75.000.000 liters

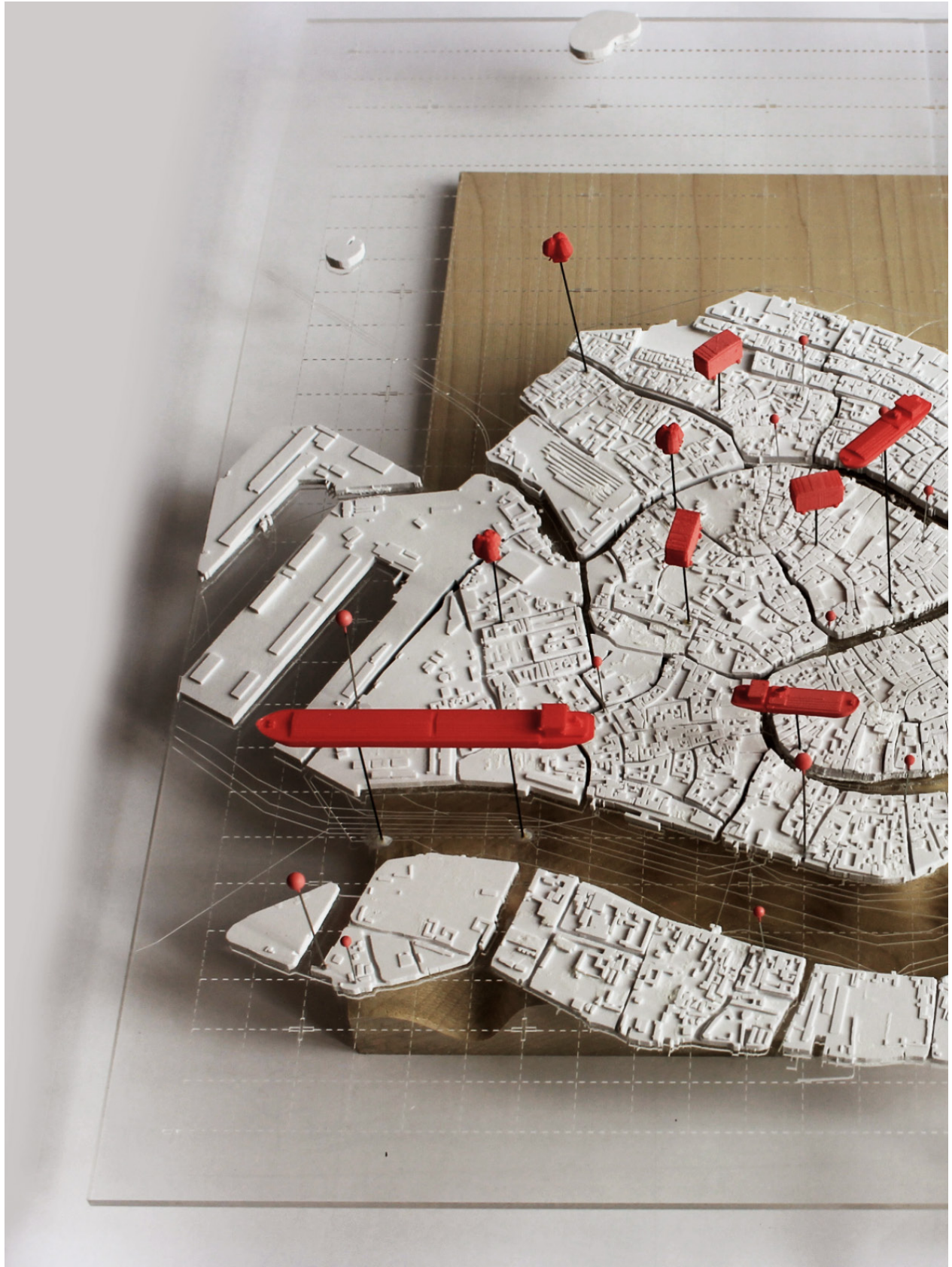


Porta-a-Porta is situated circa 2019...its key material is paint...and its agency is imagined as didactic

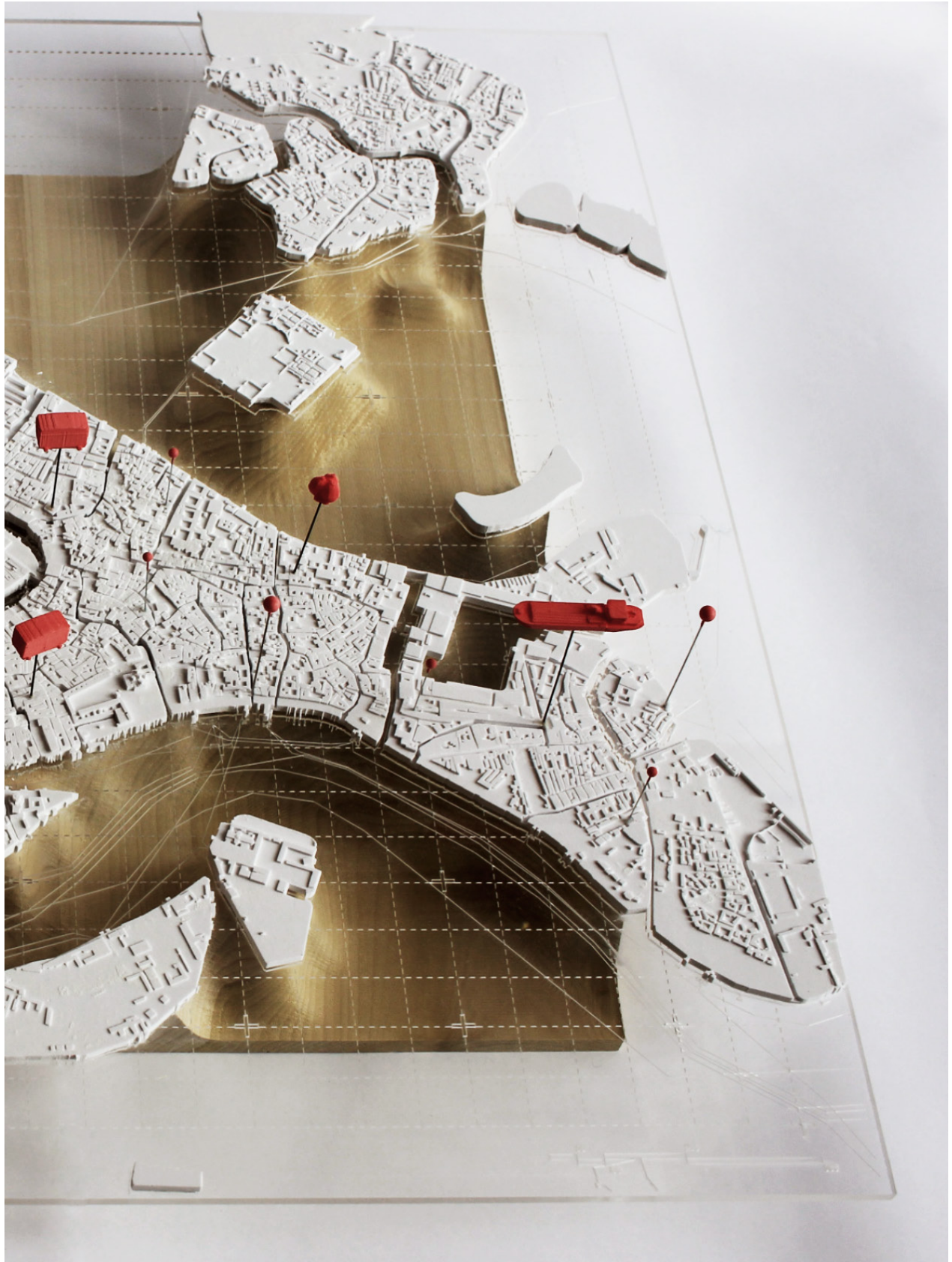






















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*Original background image from Keith Stokes on Pixels©*



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What is Venice today? It's a city of monuments and trash, trash is choreographed and territorialized back into the terraferma, the forgotten Venice, yet, the backbone to the supply of the historical city.













# The Carnival

The Carnival of Venice is an annual festival which ends with the Christian celebration of Lent. During the Middle Ages, it was the last chance to indulge on all the food and wine possible before fasting for Lent. All social restrictions were cast aside and in addition to giving up meat, Christians were supposed to abstain from “unholy” acts during Lent. As a result, rendezvous with masked strangers were permitted to put these desires to rest. Encouraging a license to pleasure, the festival was outlawed entirely in late 1700’s.







*Venezia, Il  
Carnevale,  
1834-1837,  
L'Italie, the  
Sicile, les Iles  
Eoliennes, the  
Ile d'Elbe by  
Audot Père,  
Paris*



Can we consider a scenario where we bring the Carnival back to Venice, where sin was then the masked protagonist during the Middle Ages, rising sea levels serve to mask the sin of our Anthropocene with the production of climate change.





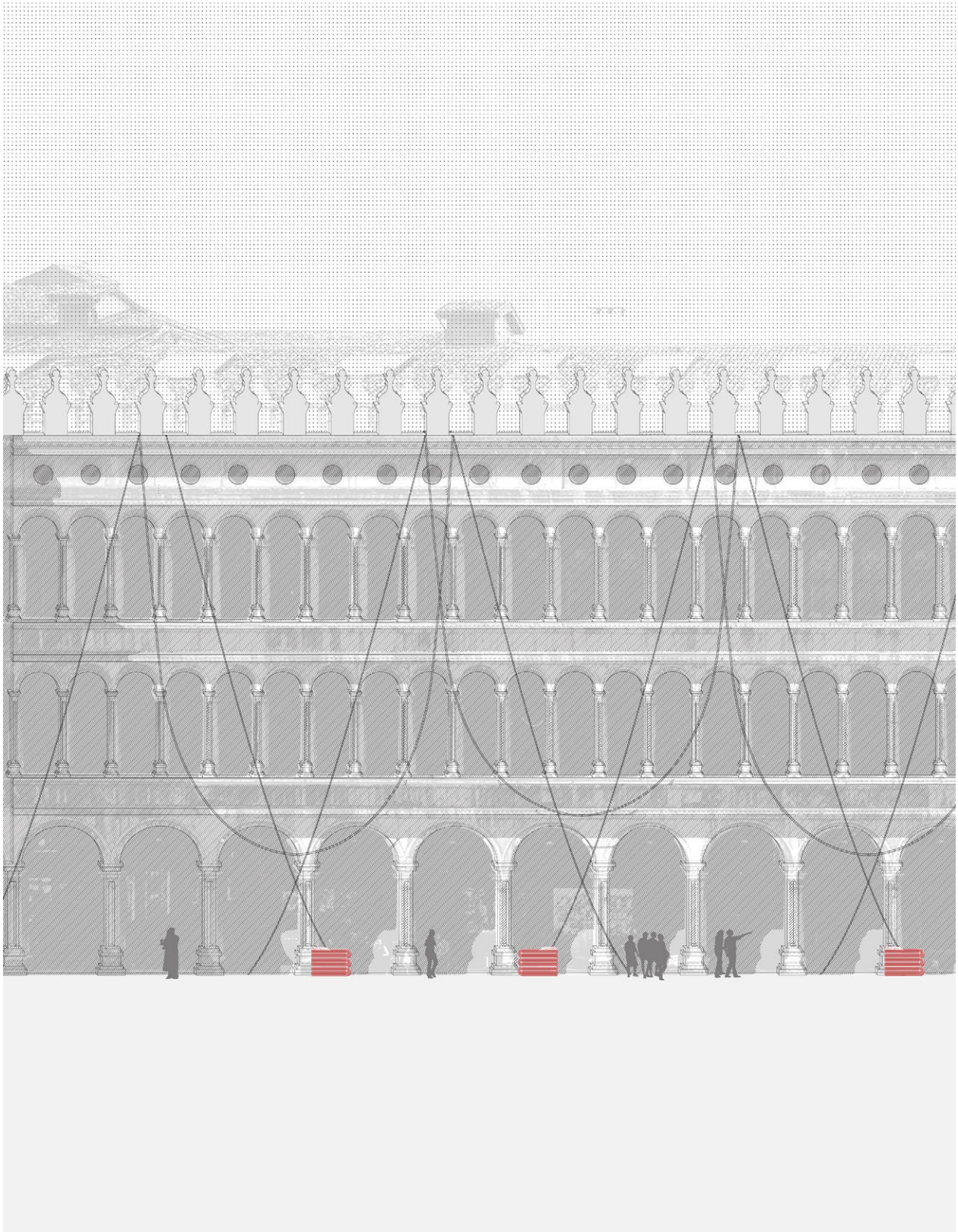


*Original image  
from San  
Marco Quarter,  
Getty Images©*

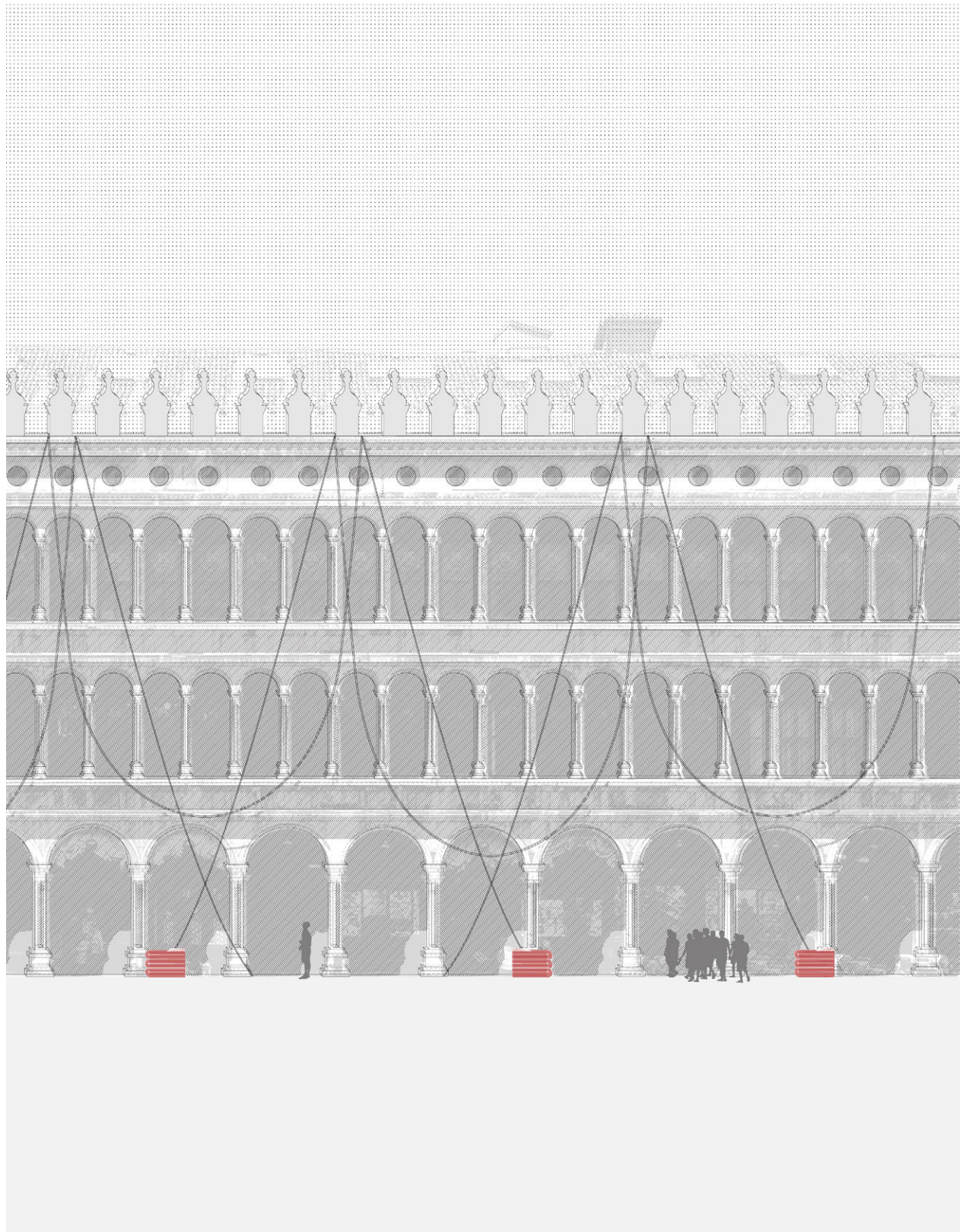


Such that visitors all over the world can come and participate in the Anthropocene by putting forth our grotesque nature.





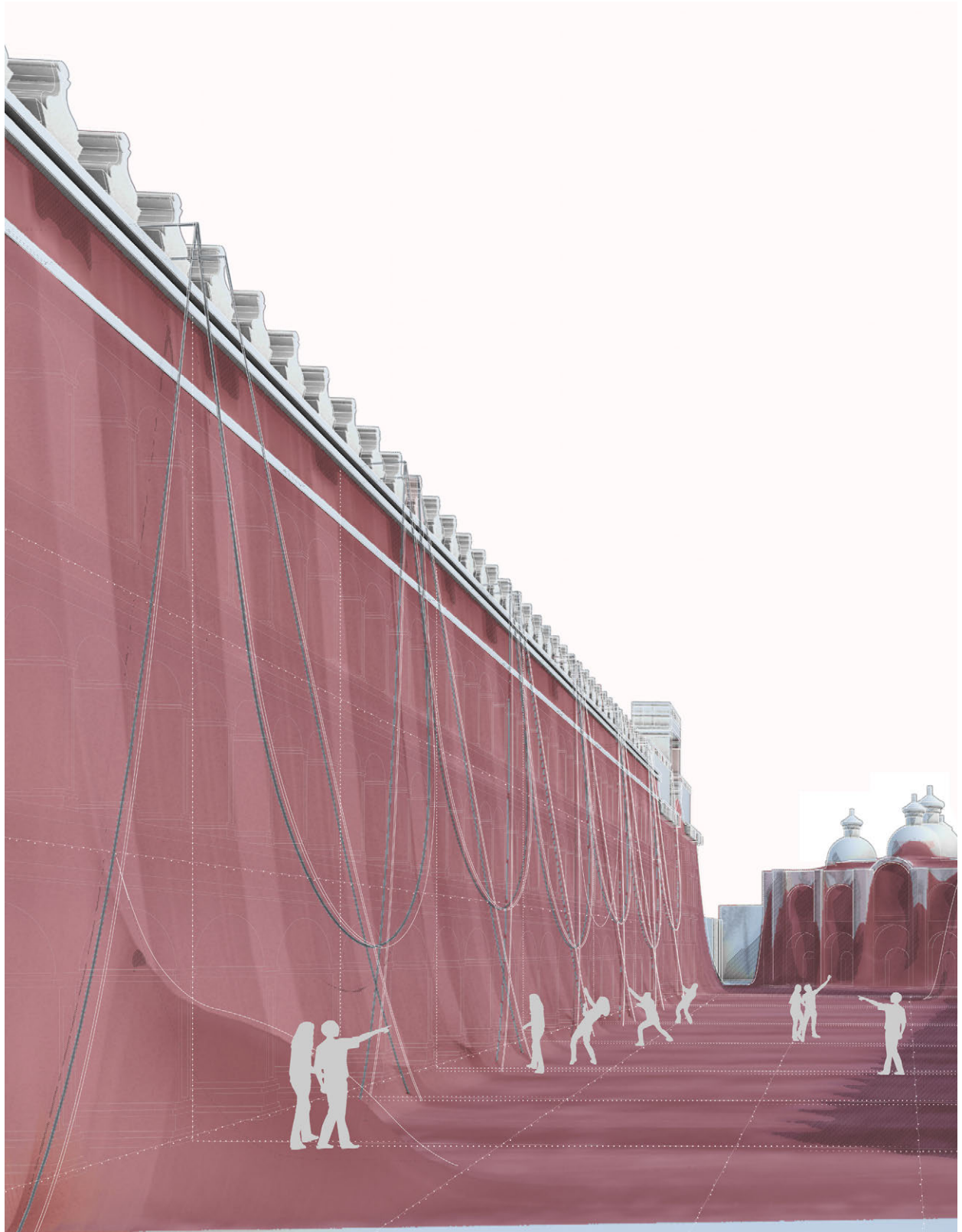


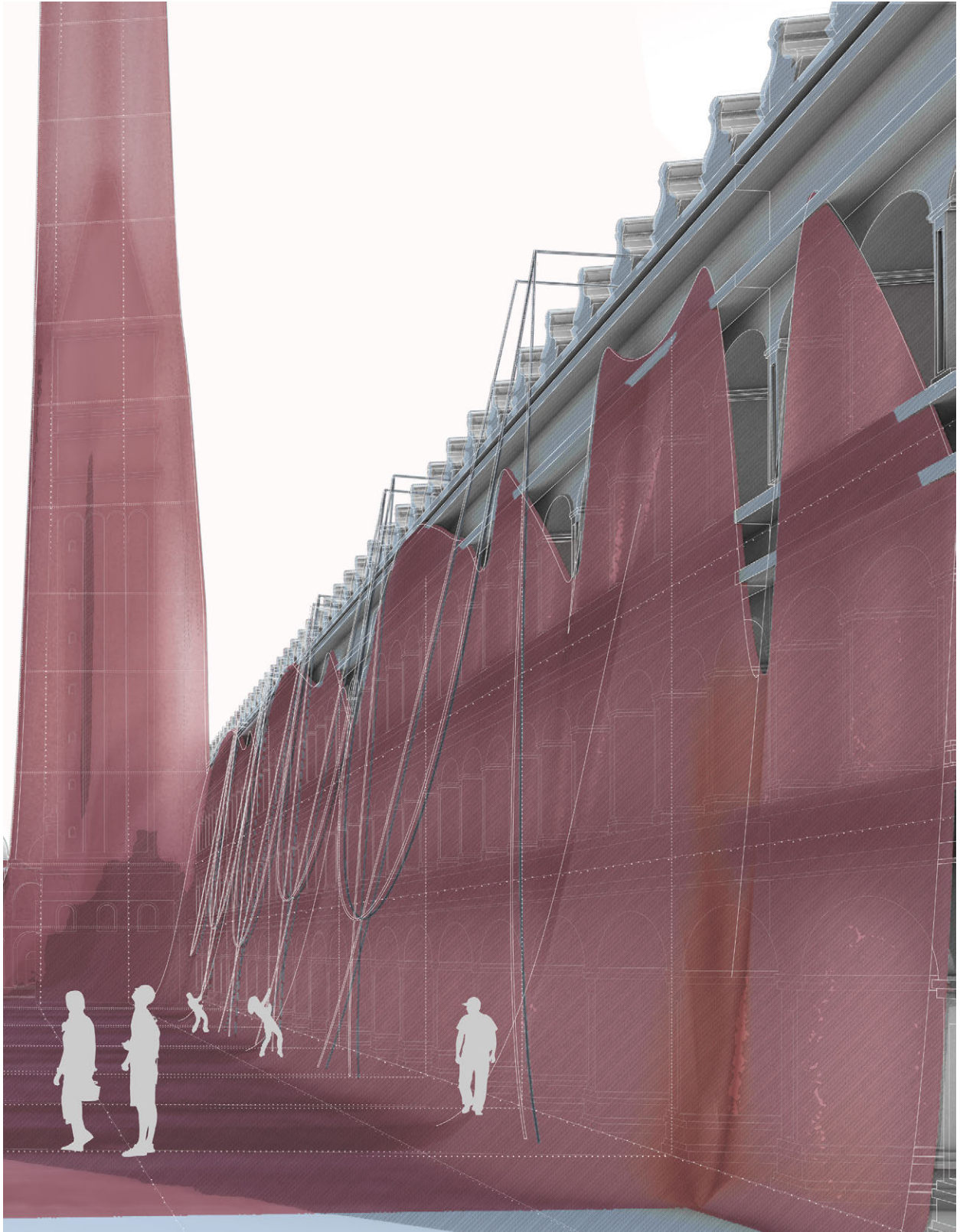




The city participates in the carnival by wearing a mask,  
an anonymous liner no different than that of a landfill.







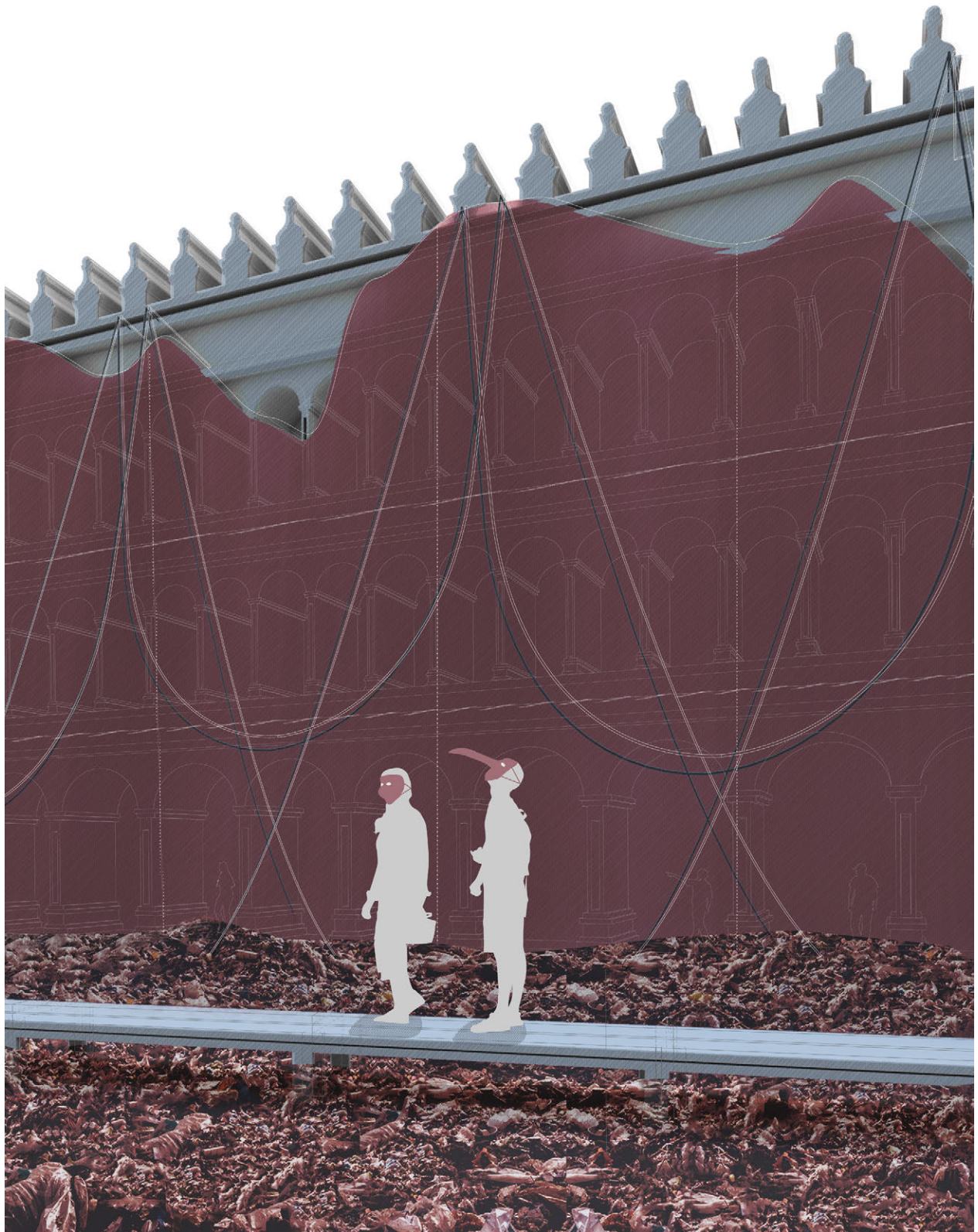


An orchestration of piling waste, time, and compulsive celebration. Visitors participate in the carnival by wearing a mask that has been retrofitted with an appropriate breathing apparatus.





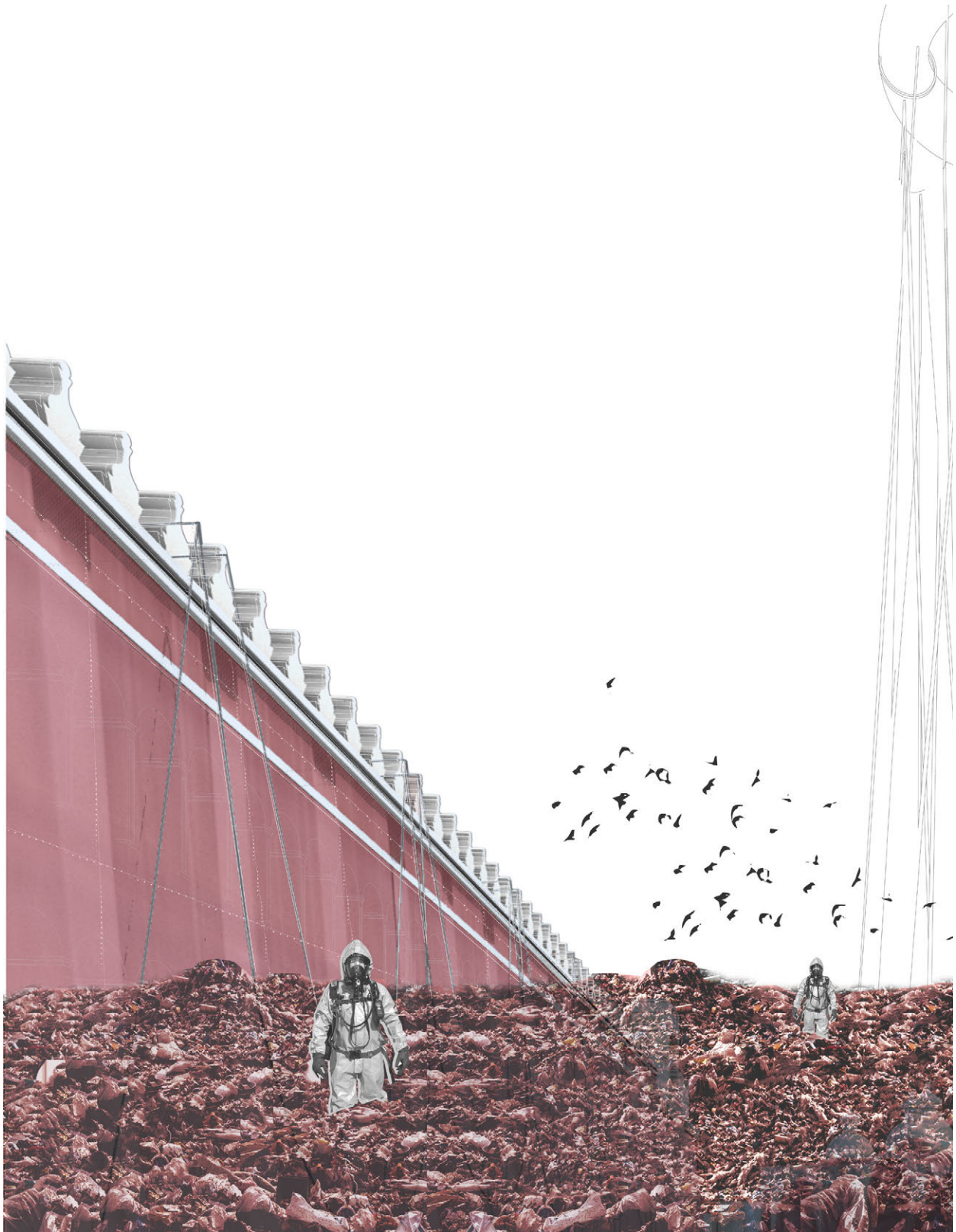






Filling up a week's worth of consumption marked  
at 78 cm high at the Piazza di San Marco.





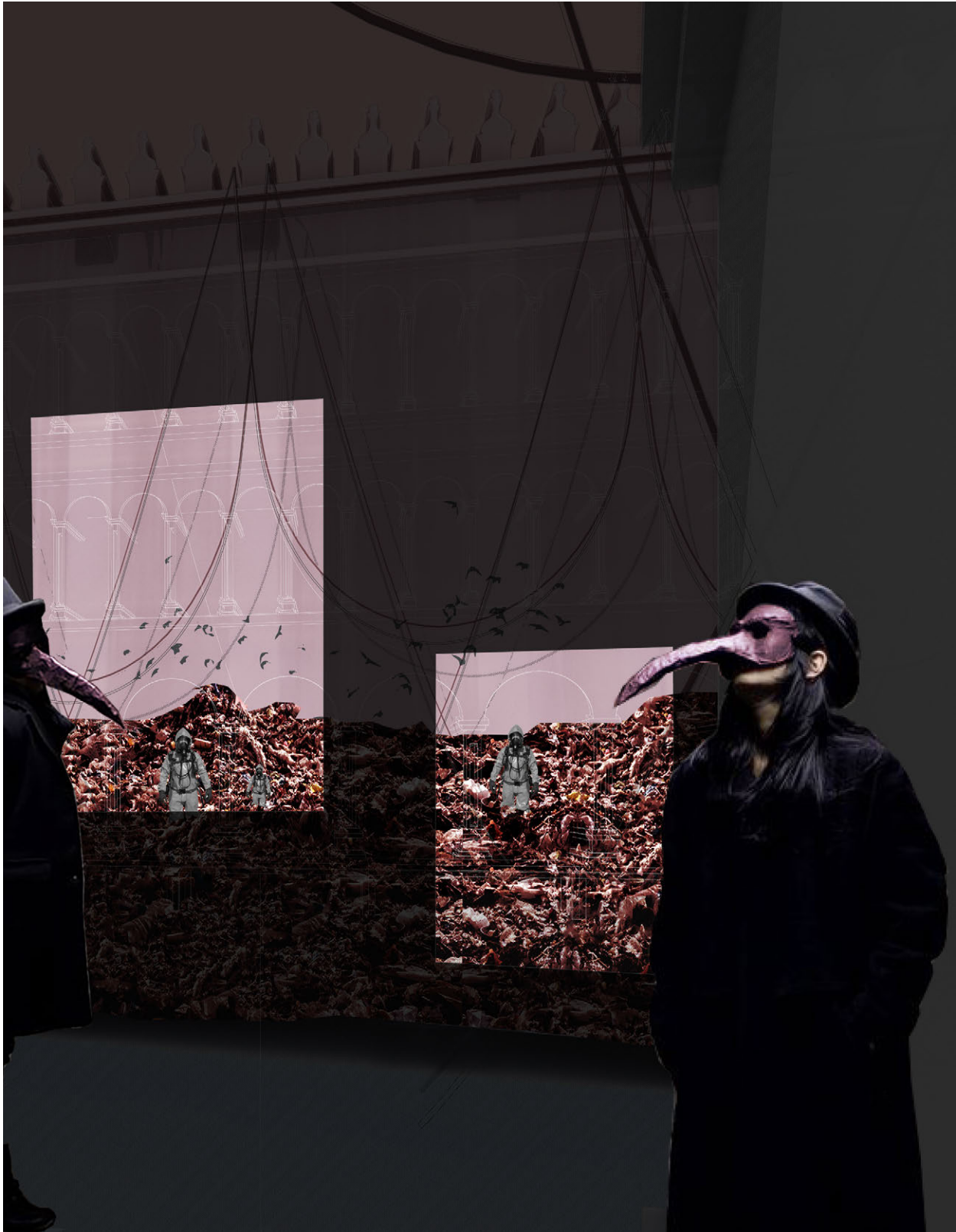




By reveling in our waste as a momentary form of release and compulsive celebration, we are confronted with our most grotesque nature, and thus we begin to repent our sins.









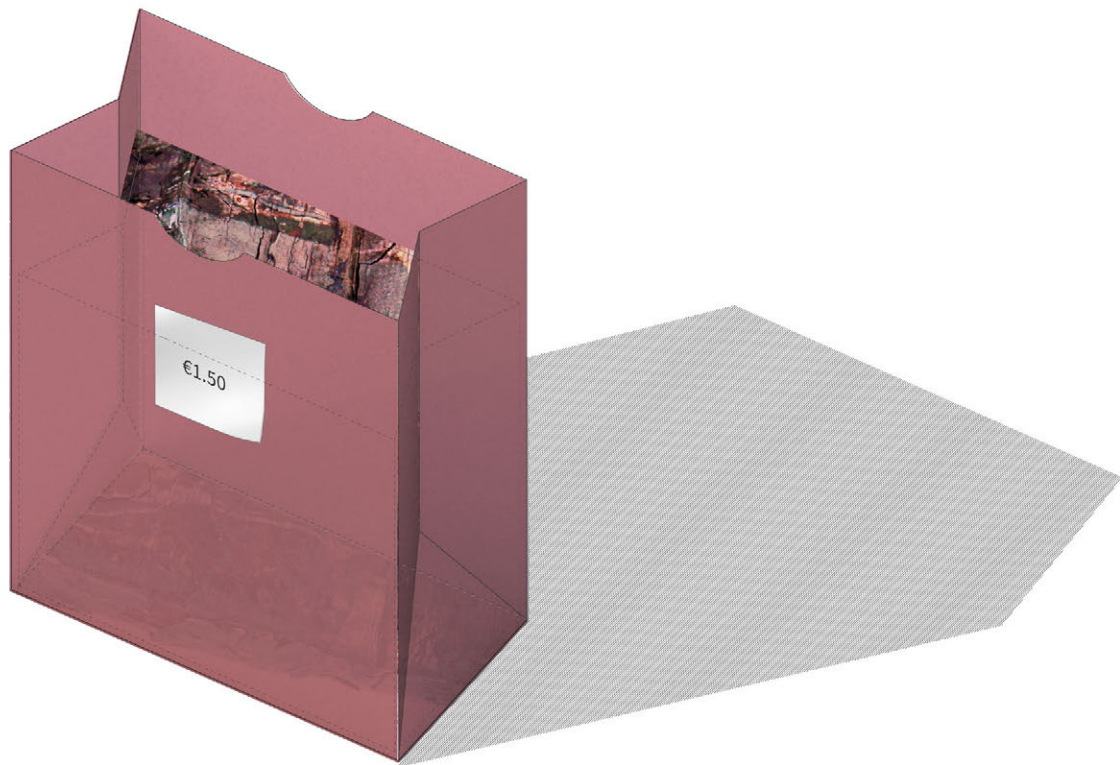
Therefore The Carnival reshapes the material and ritual infrastructures of the old carnival, reorienting it towards the products of our consumption



*the average garbage removal cost is*

*€123,000<sup>1</sup> daily*

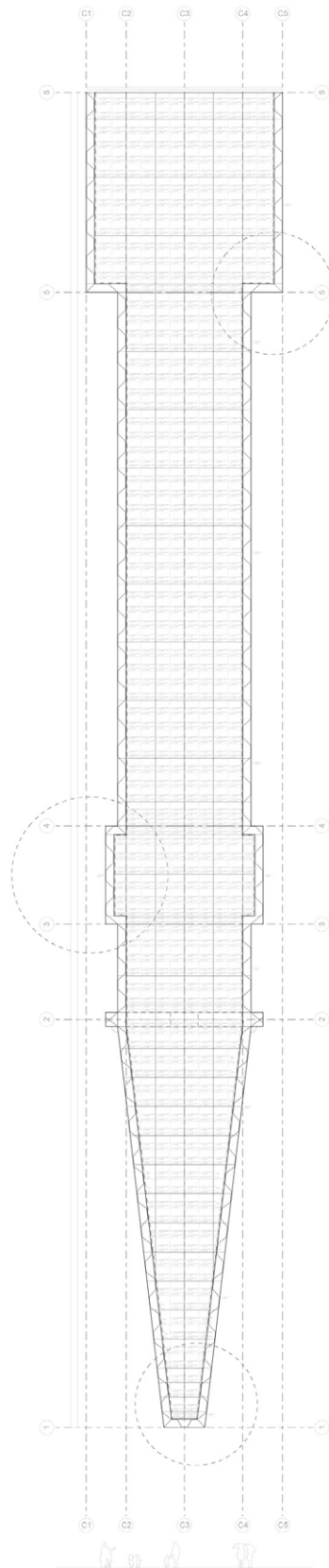
*1. Veritas, & Venezia, C. d.(2013). Tia e nuovo contratto di servizio di Venezia*

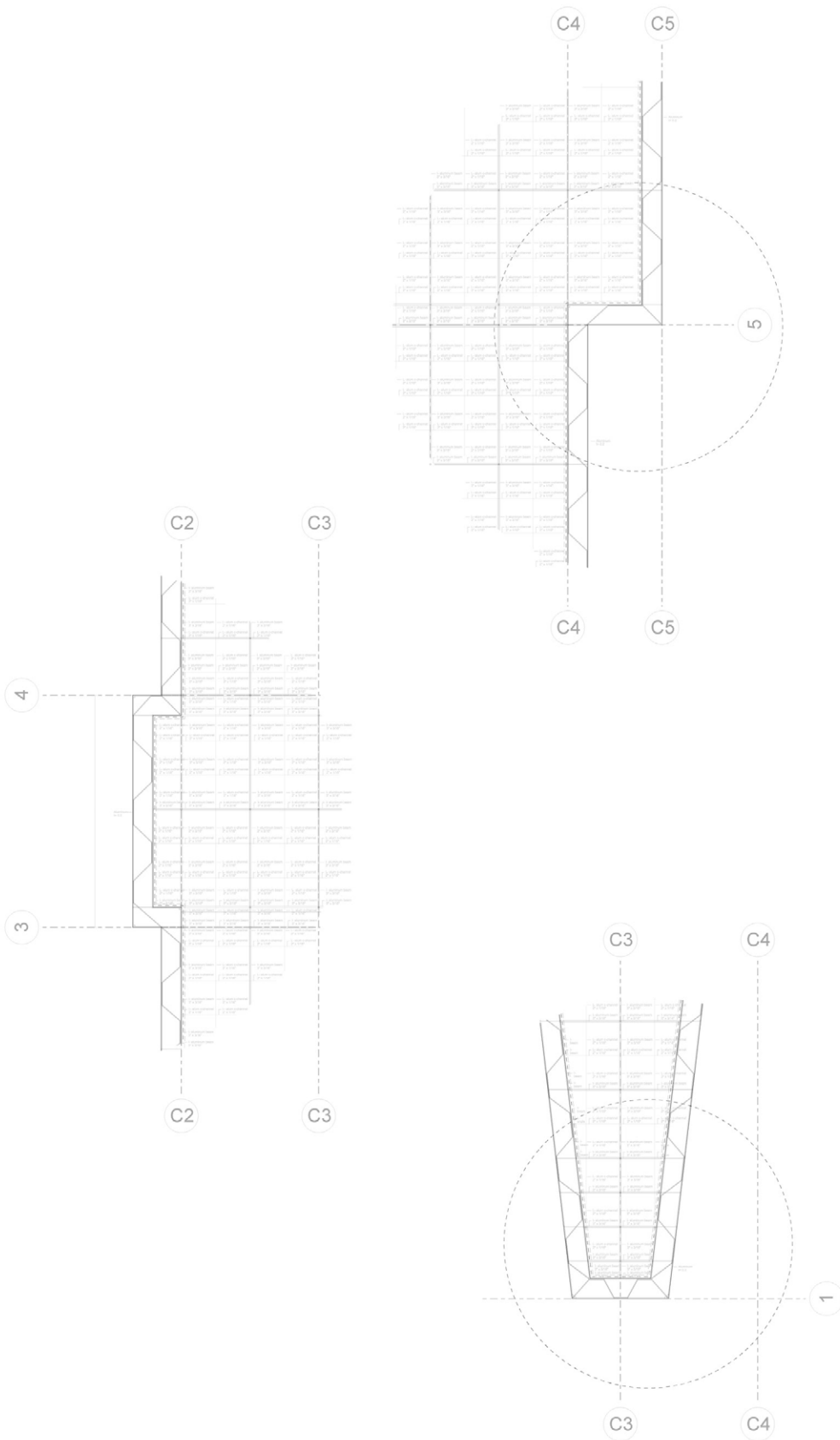




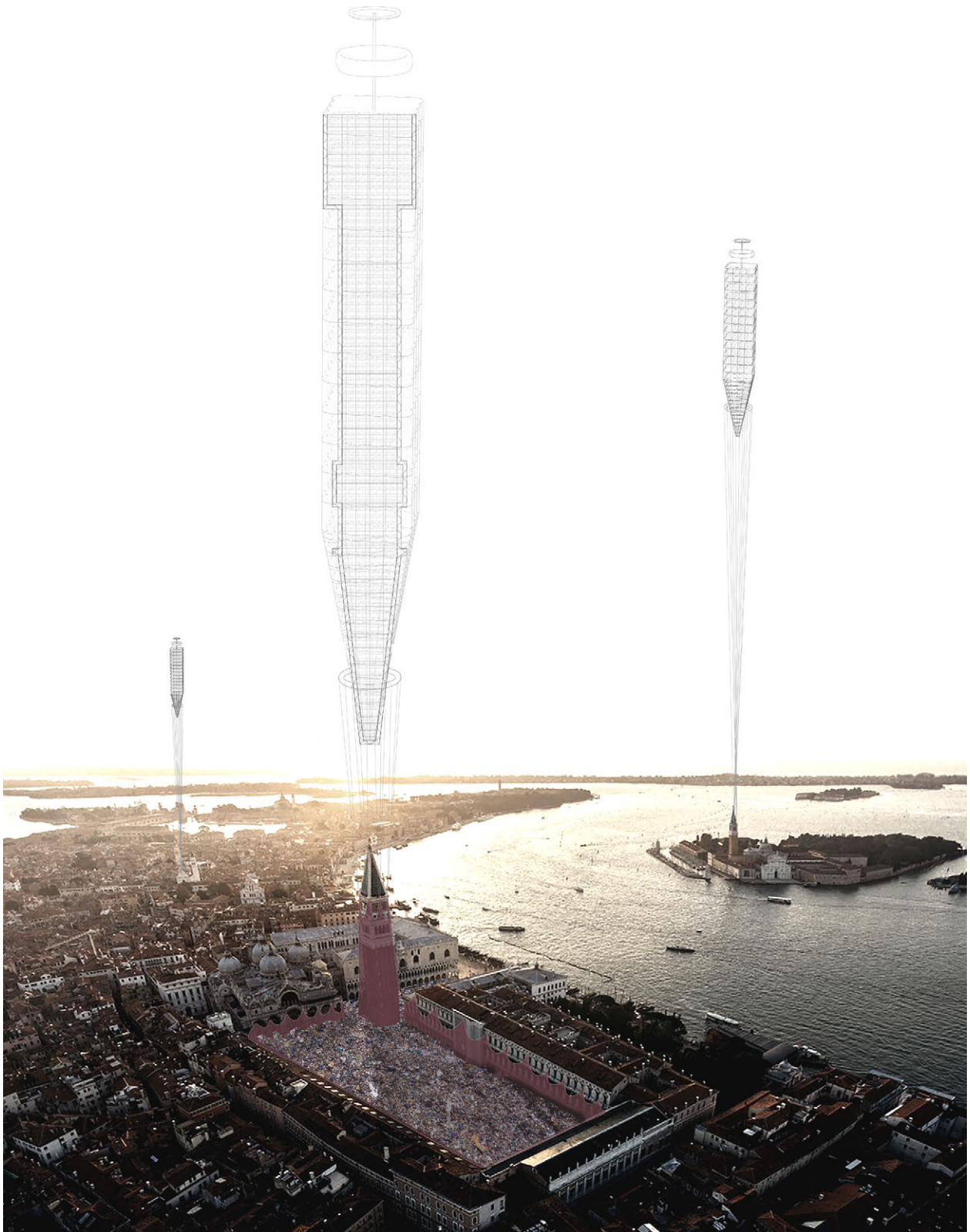
and reorienting its relationship to tourist comforts  
to something like discomforts over the period of time  
we have left before Venice's drowning.



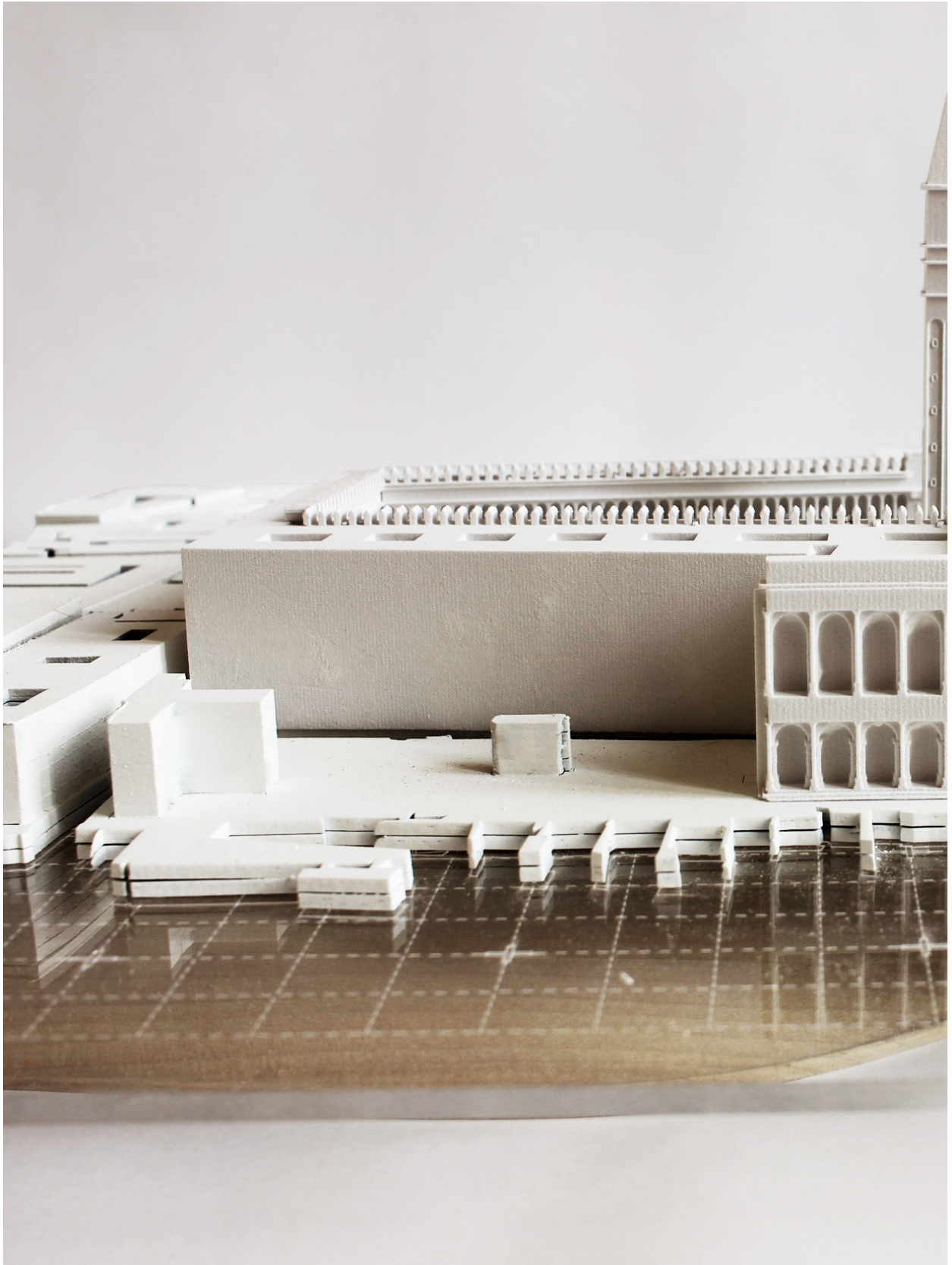




*the city's most celebrated architecture as ephemera*

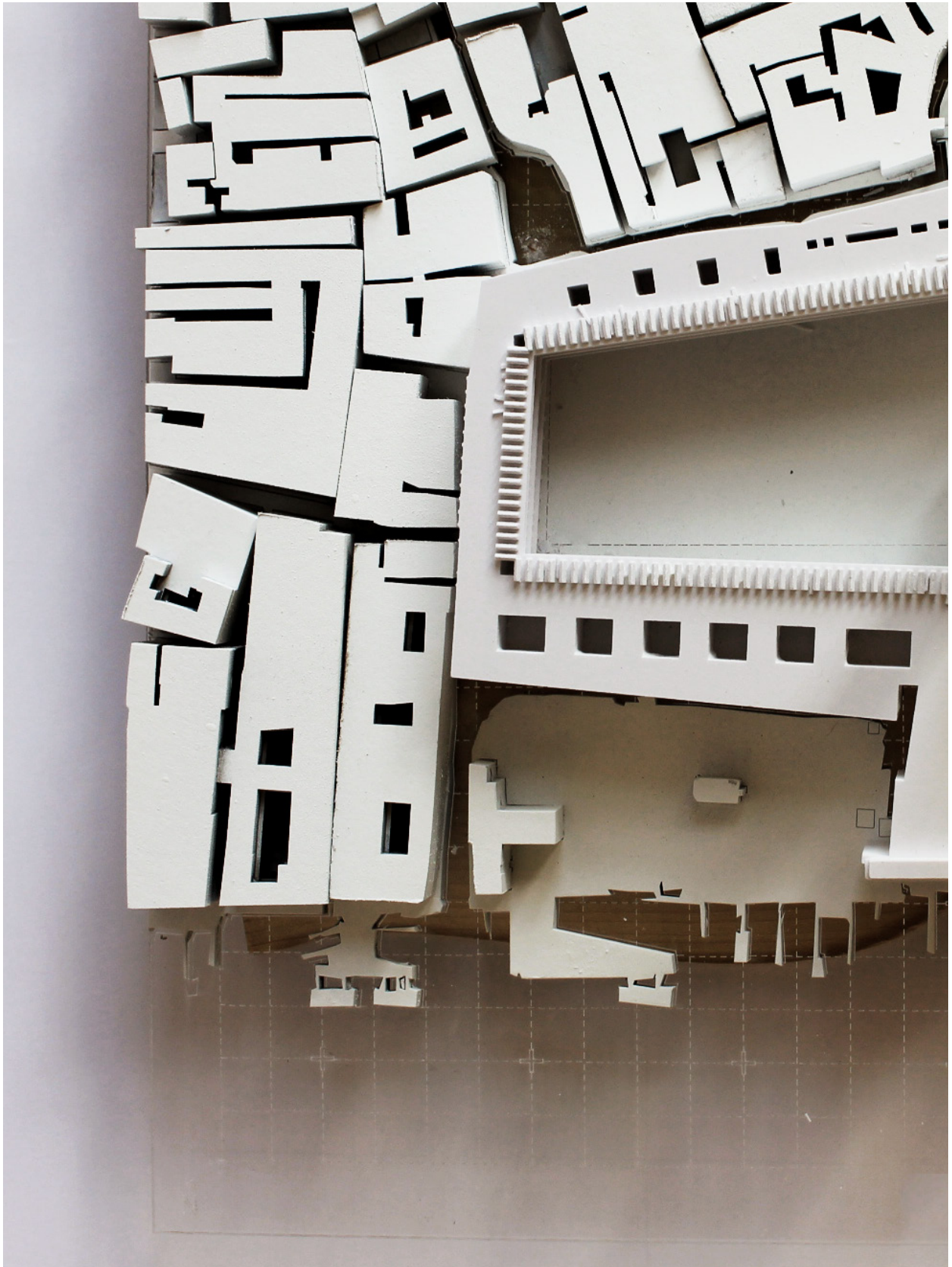


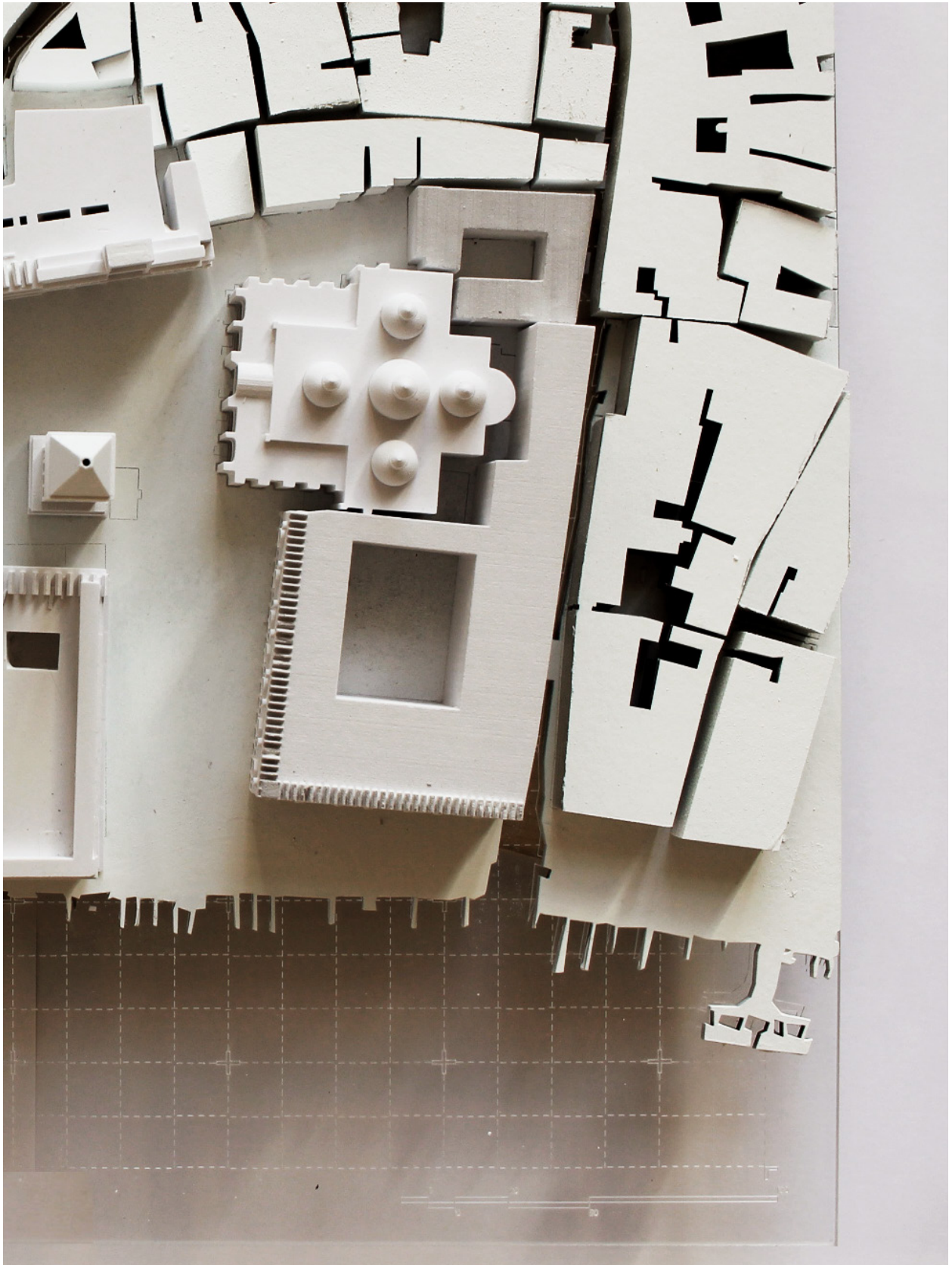




























*finito!*

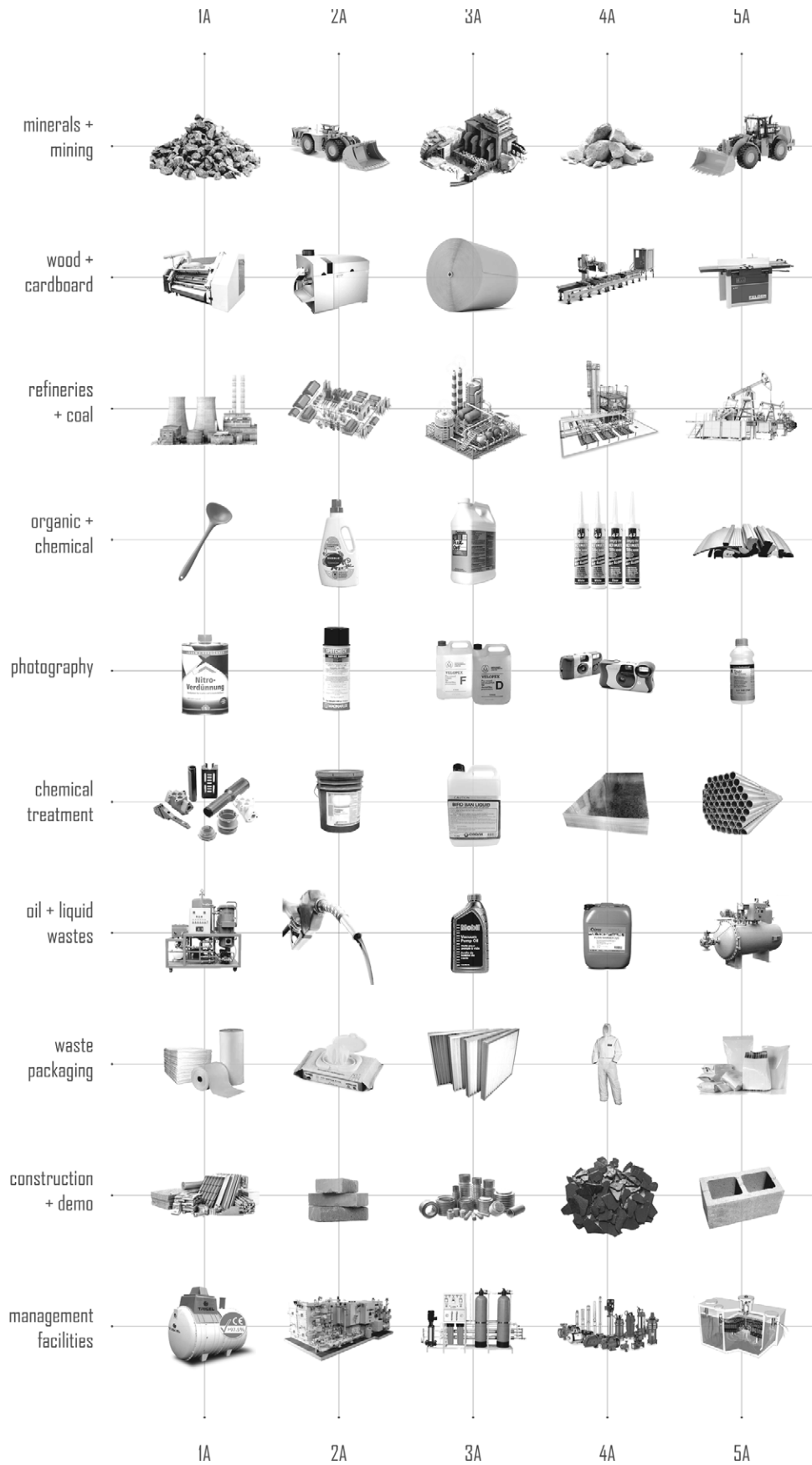


# The Monument

Venice is no longer a historical city, it has been repurposed as a city of consumption, masked by historical figures. By the year 2050, 24% of Venice's buildings will disappear because of flooding. All of which are currently housing a form of cultural typology. As the majority of housing structures have been repurposed to fit a need of cultural consumption, the disappearing buildings will leave Venice with a partial representation of what the city has stood for since its birth.

Our Waste Stream is so developed that we can officially catalogue every single item that modern citizens have produced according to the way it will be discarded.



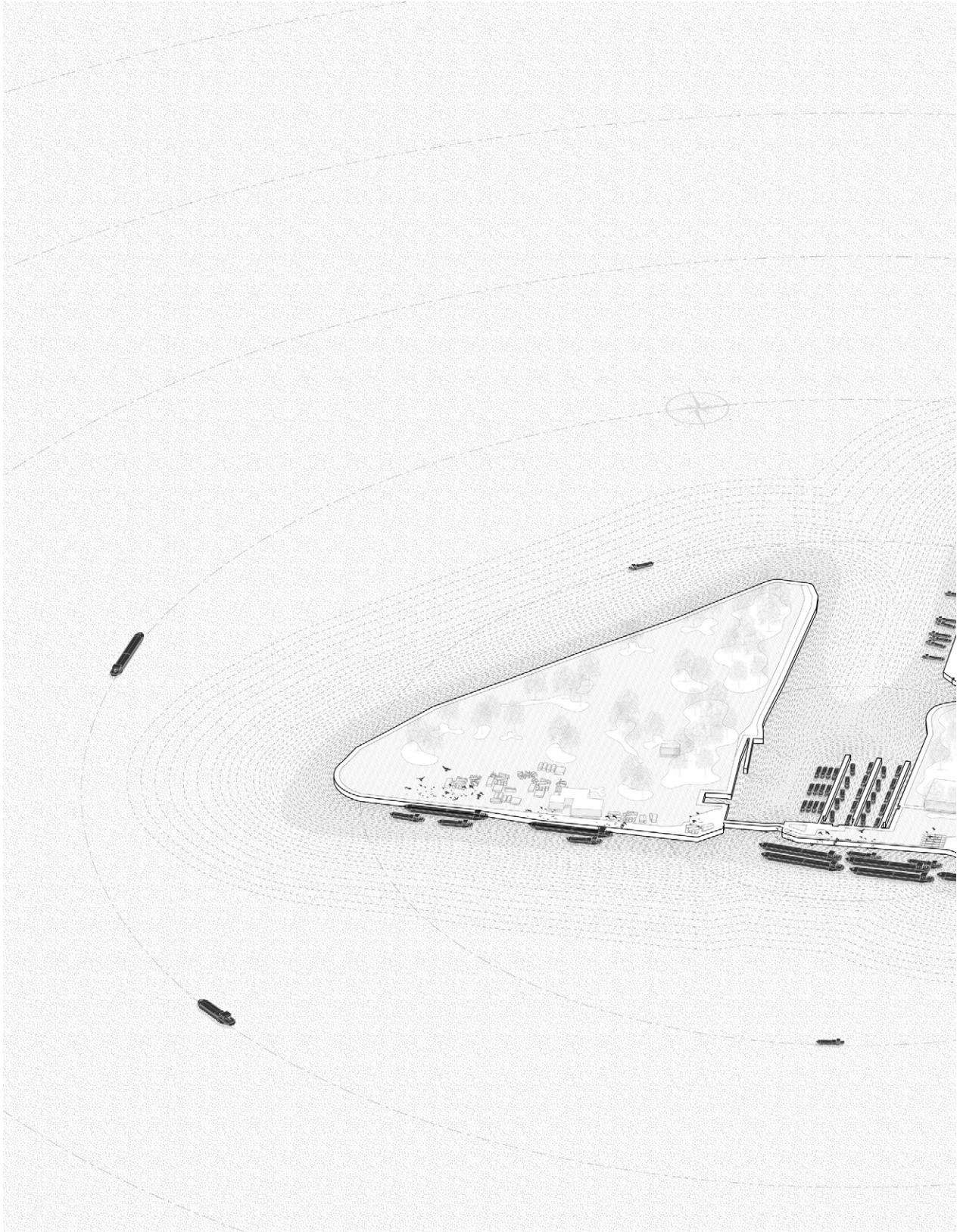




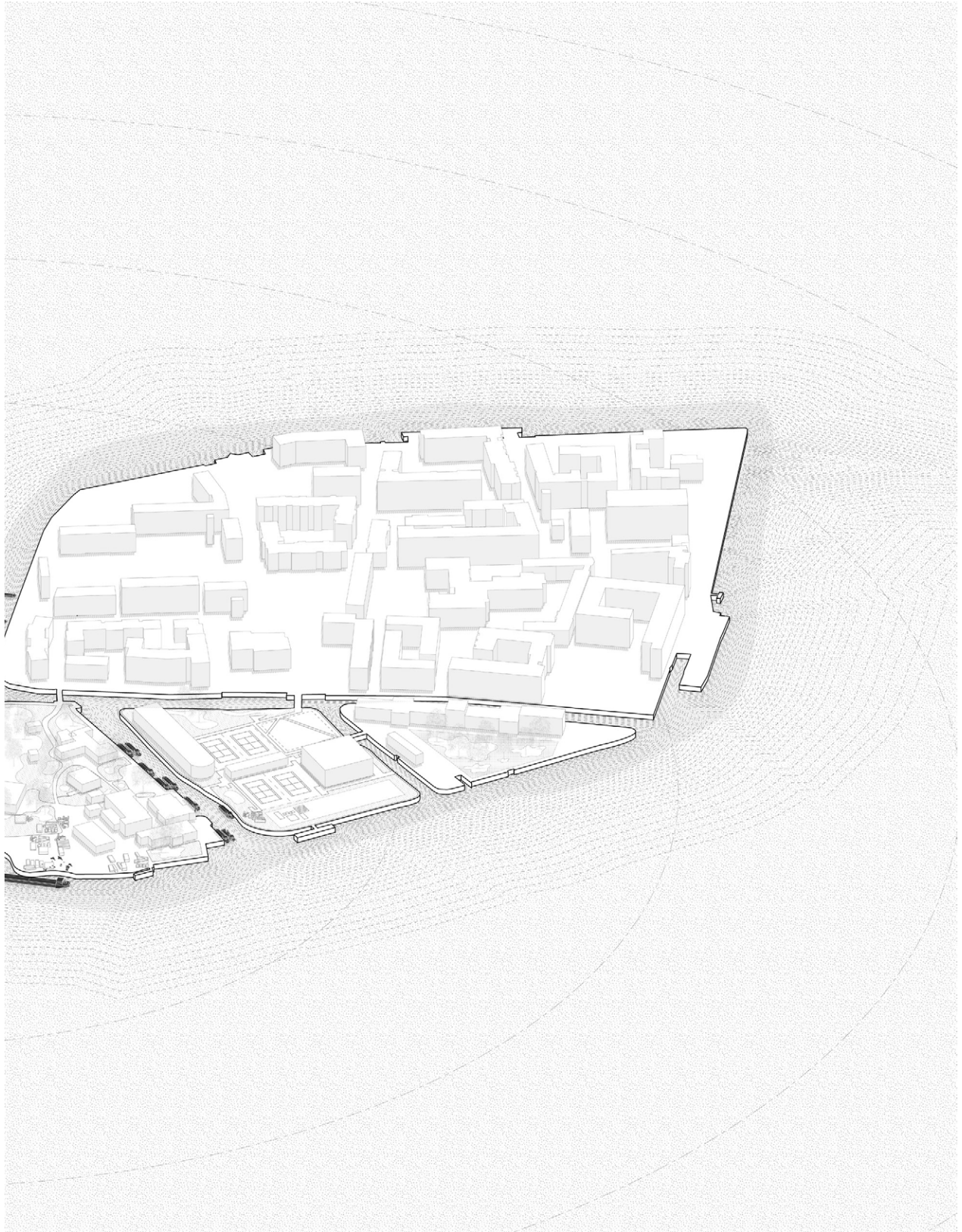


Sacca San Biaggio was an island added to Venice's map in 1943 for the sole purpose of becoming its landfill. While it officially gave up its position as landfill 15 years ago, unofficially waste continued to pile up evidently in this location.

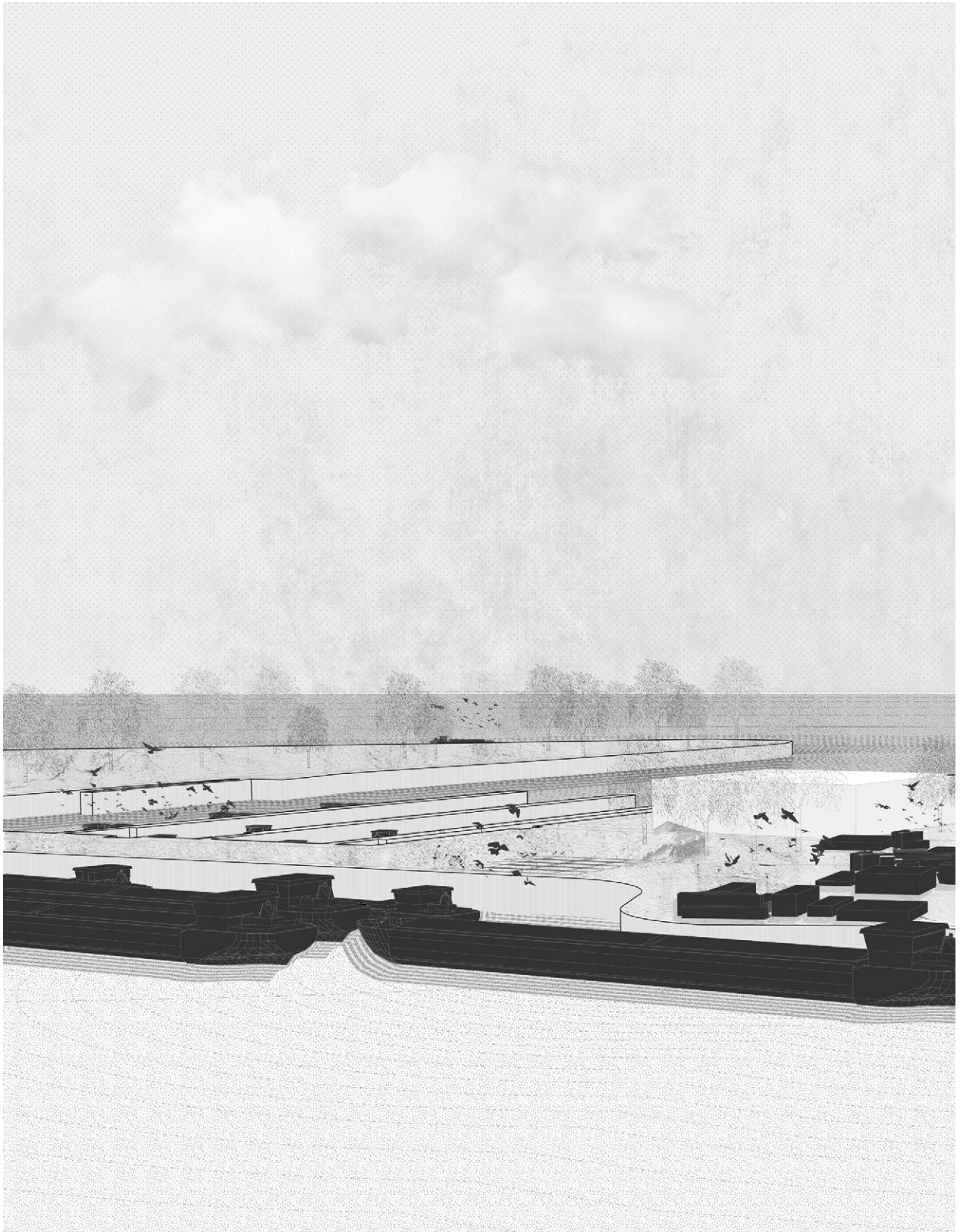




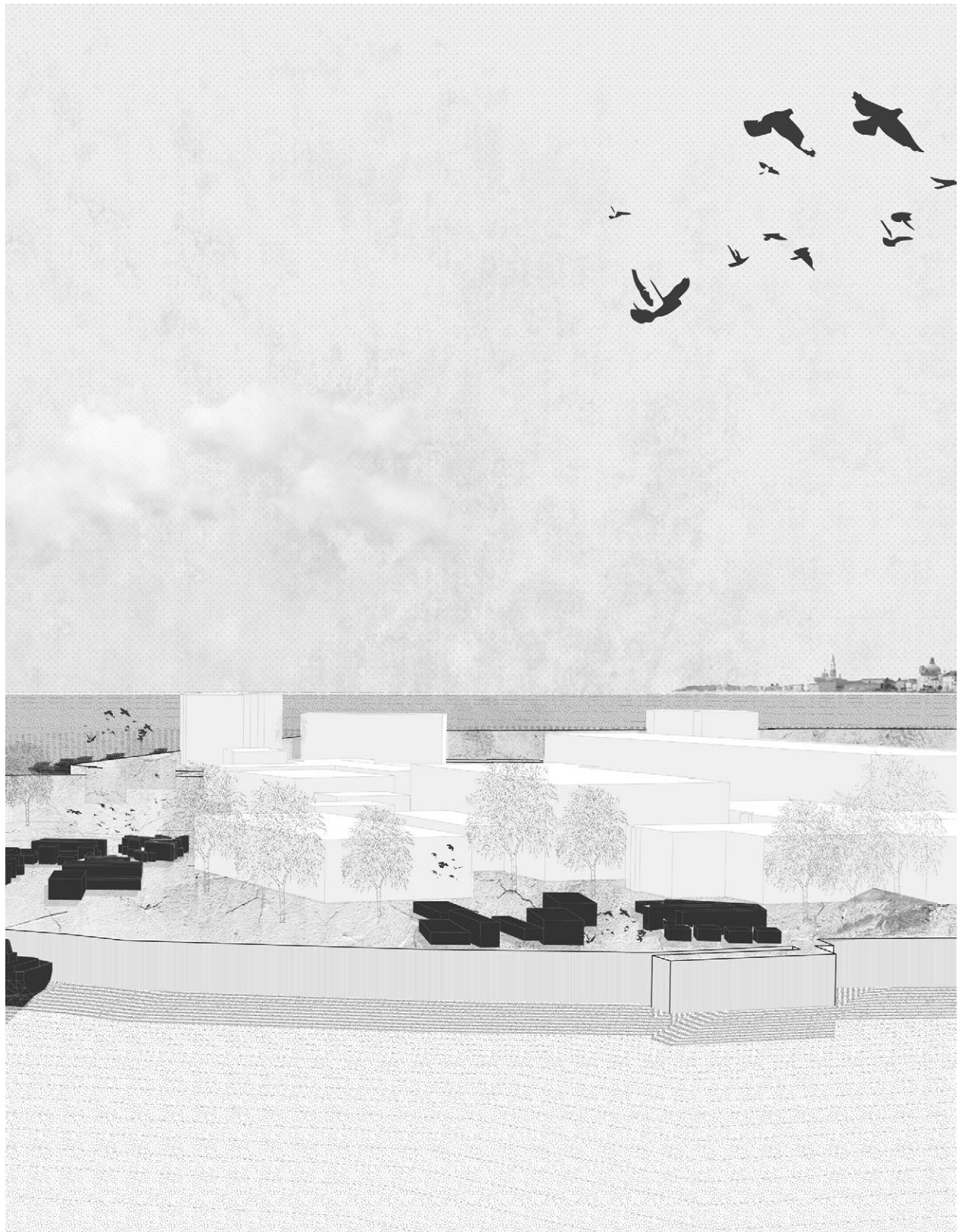










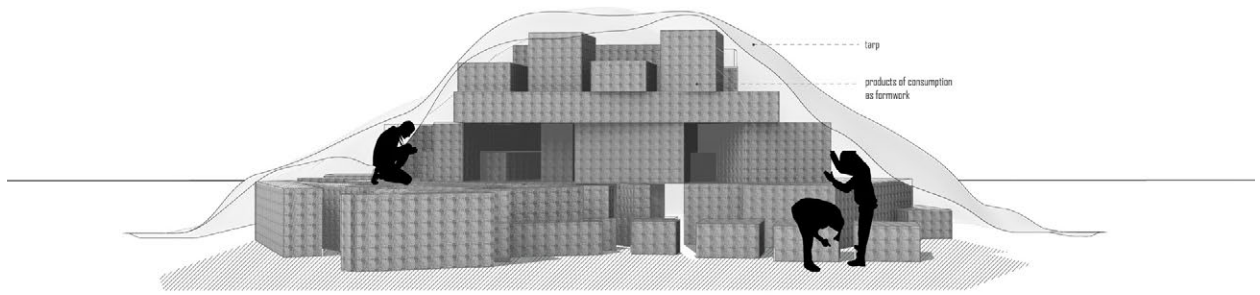






The monument uses trash as a building material. It is used both as formwork and as casted into the building. The next set of images render visible the volume of waste in a specific amount of time.



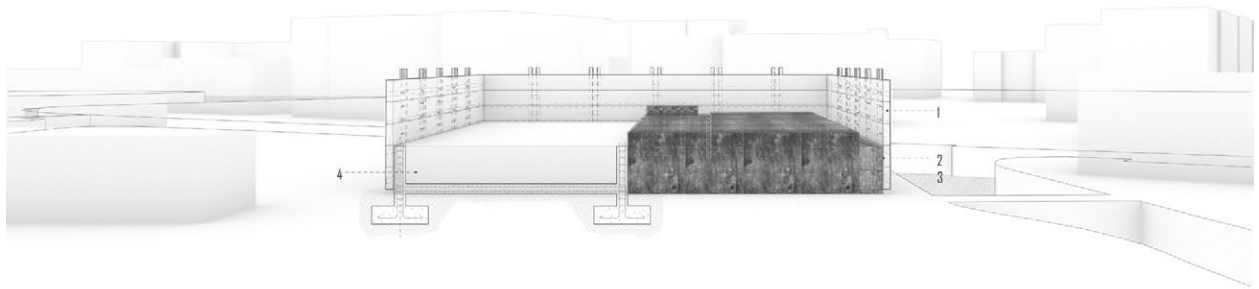






waste as formwork, materialized as  
accumulated volume in time. This  
formwork is representative of the space  
that will be then occupied publicly.

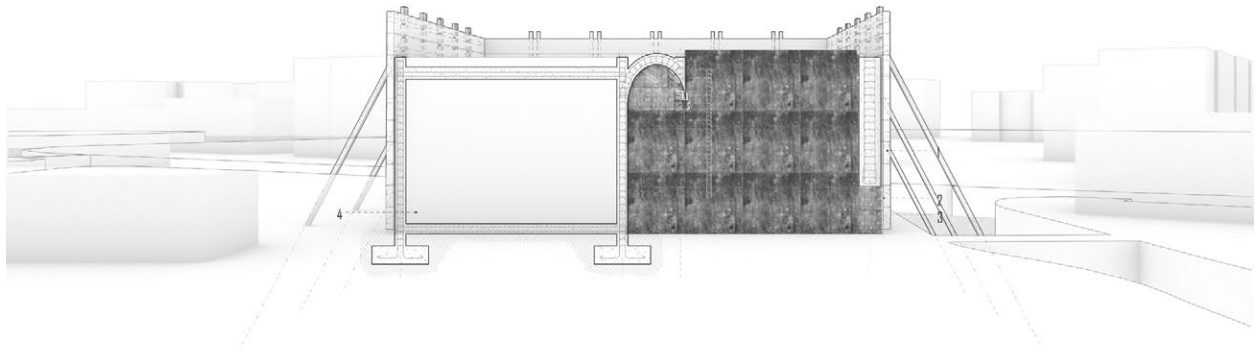
3 hours



- 1 traditional formwork
- 2 products of consumption as formwork
- 3 liner
- 4 material cast

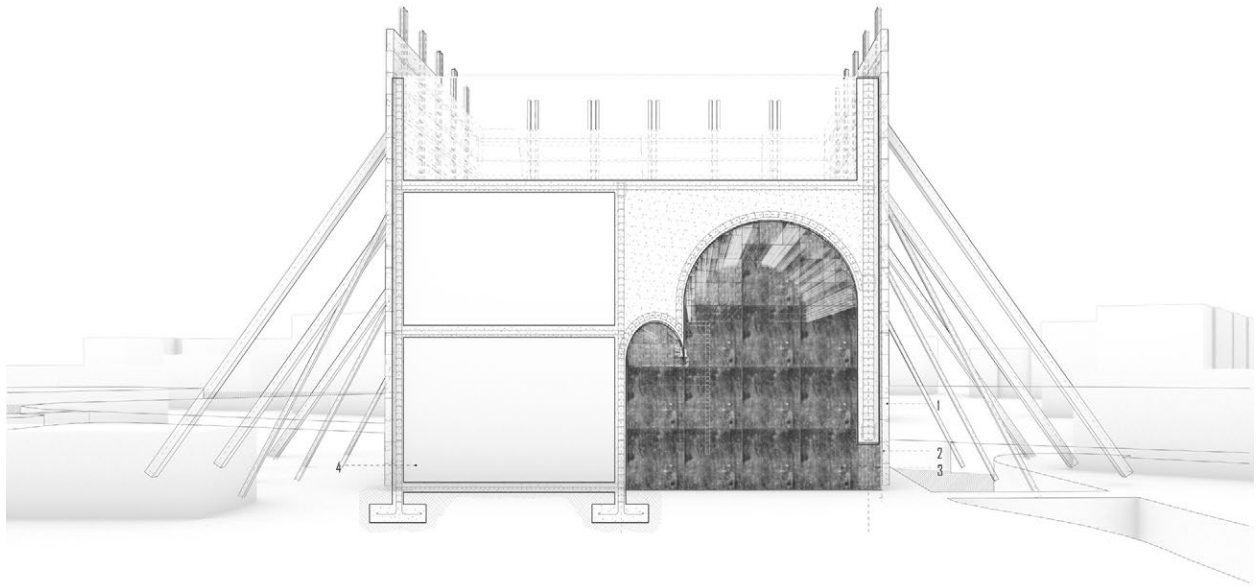


14 hours



- 1 traditional formwork
- 2 products of consumption as formwork
- 3 liner
- 4 material cast

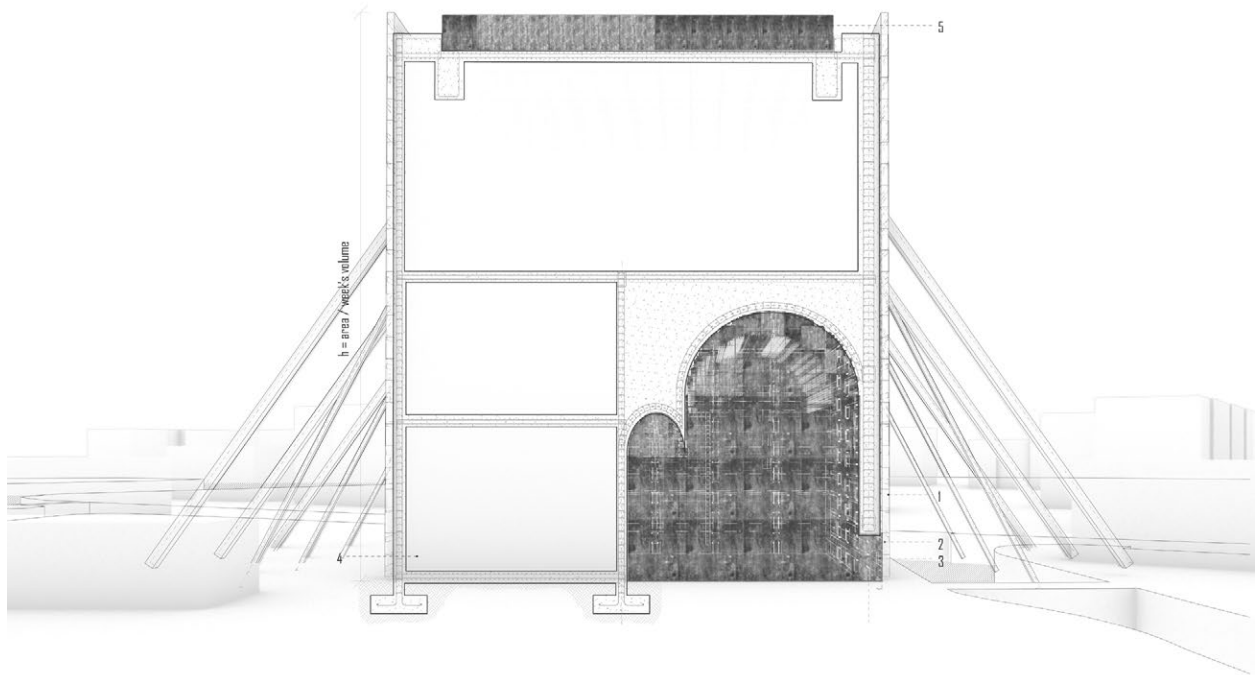
24 hours



- 1 traditional formwork
- 2 products of consumption as formwork
- 3 liner
- 4 material cast



30 hours



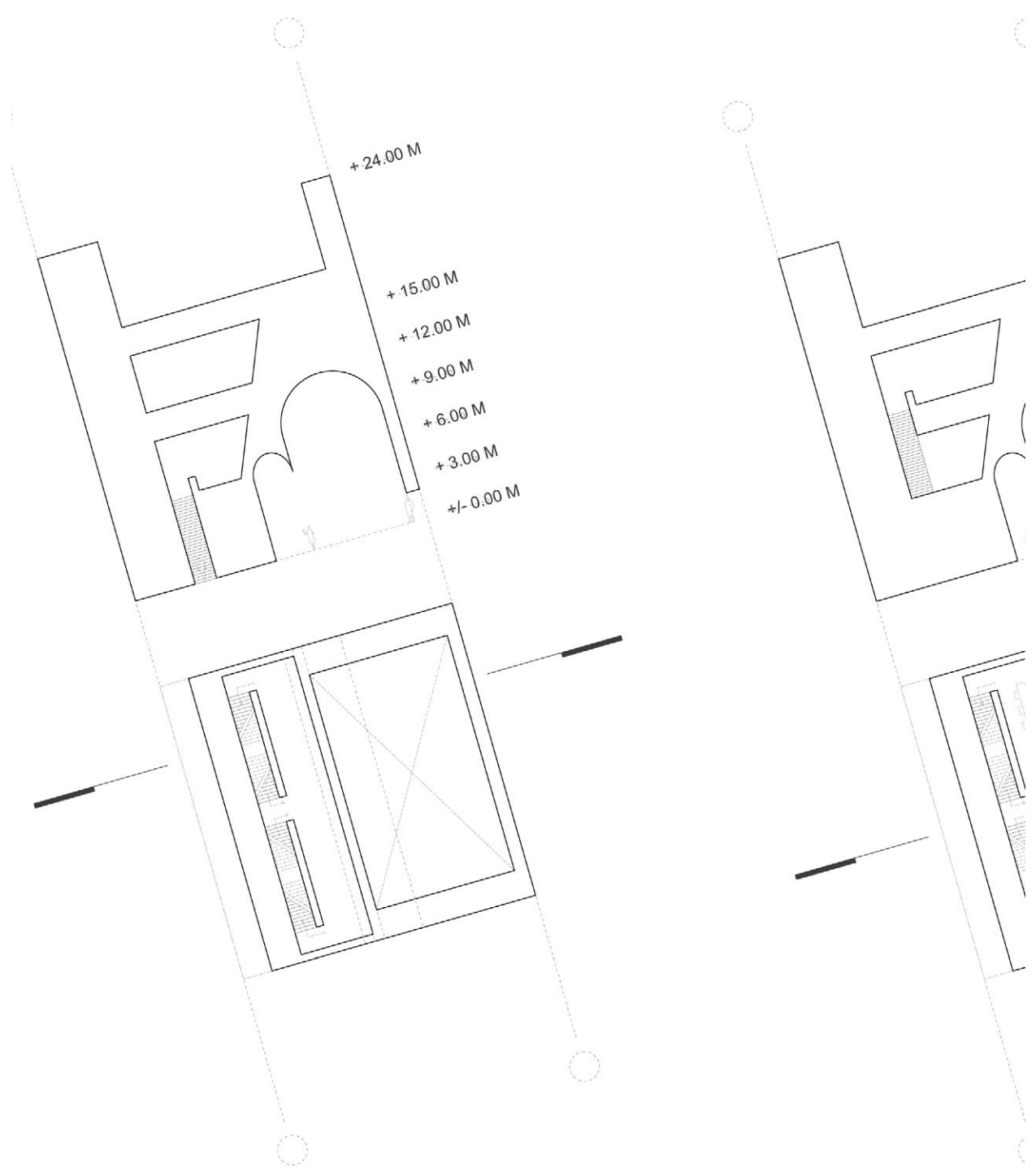
- 1 traditional formwork
- 2 products of consumption as formwork
- 3 liner
- 4 material cast

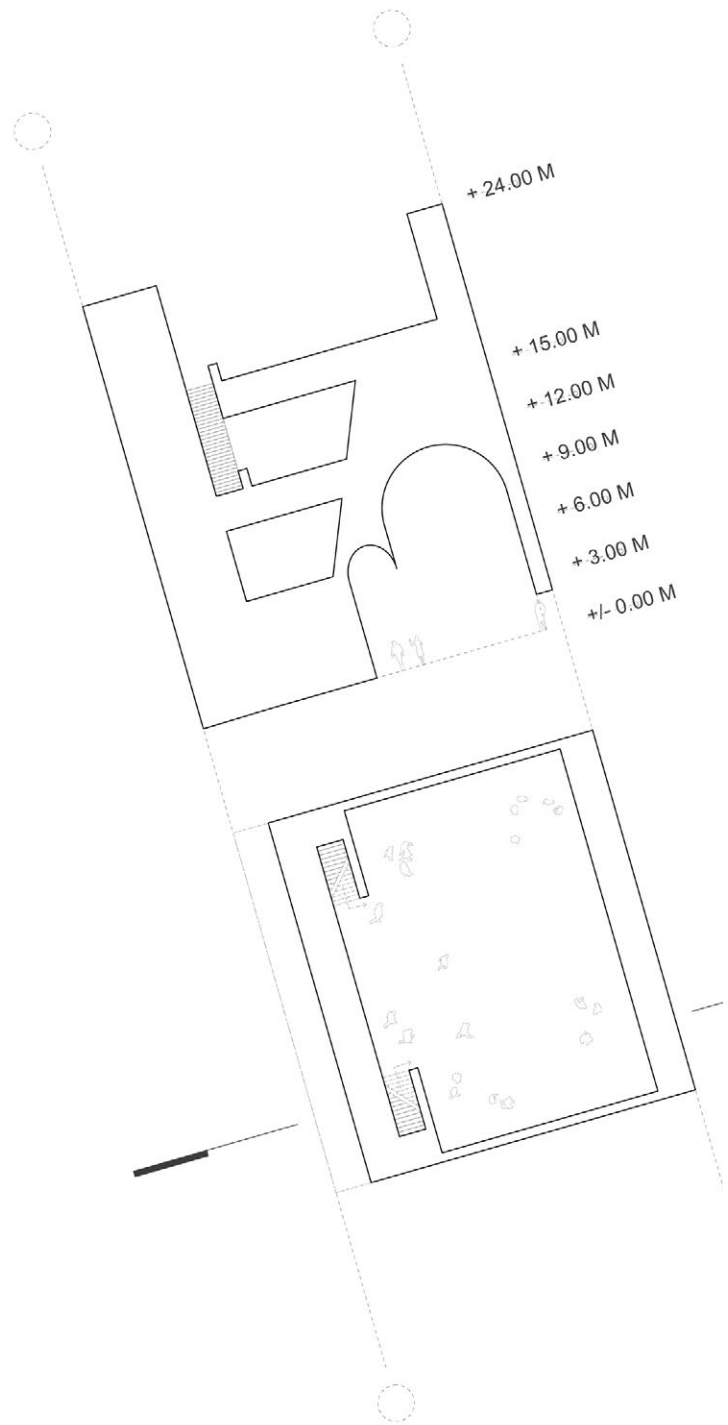
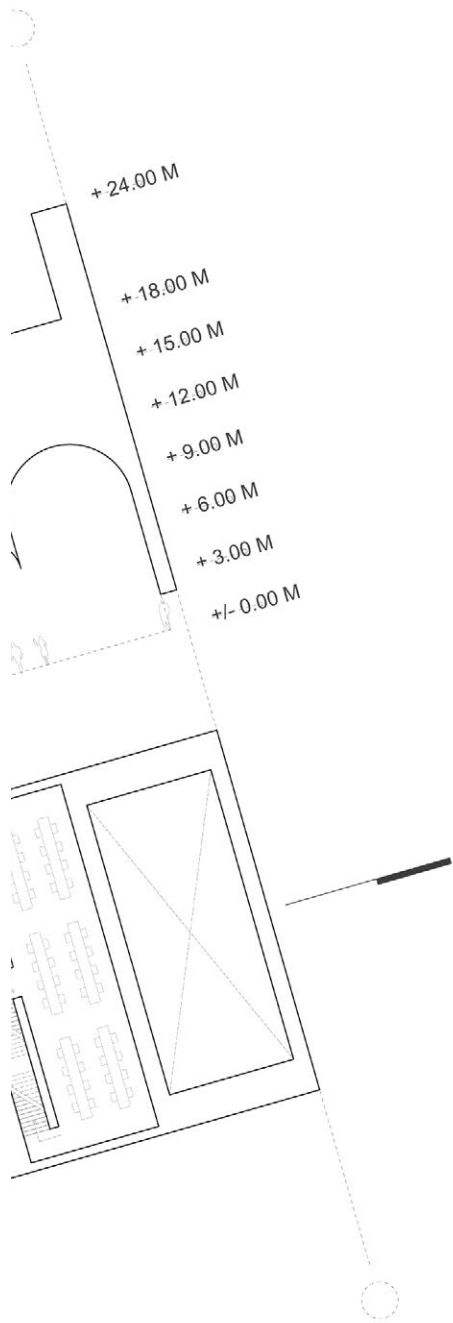


## A week and a day

the volume of the formwork is the equivalent of 24 hours of collected waste. While the volume of the entire building is the equivalent to the waste collected in a week.





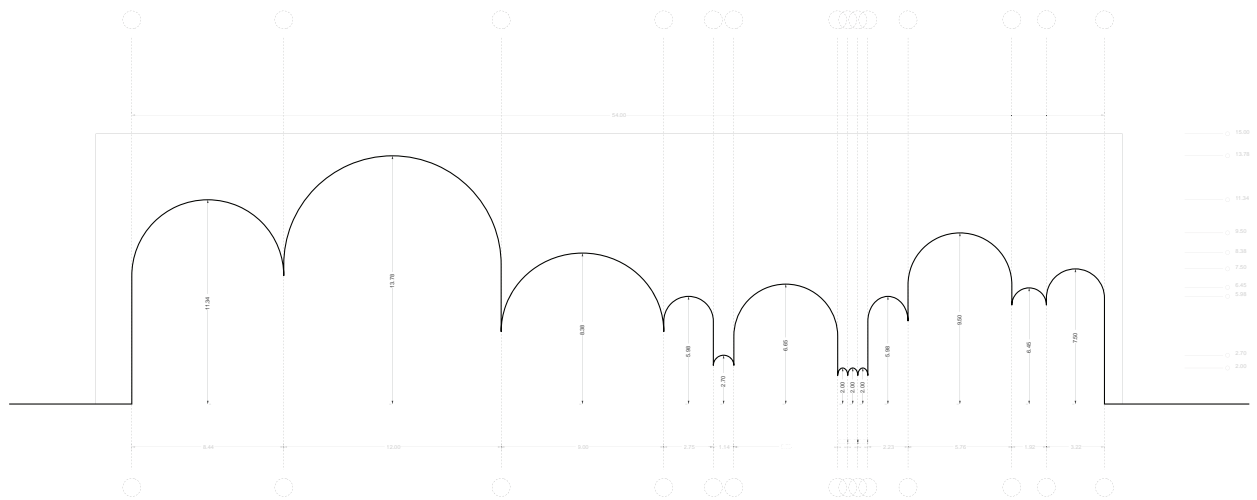


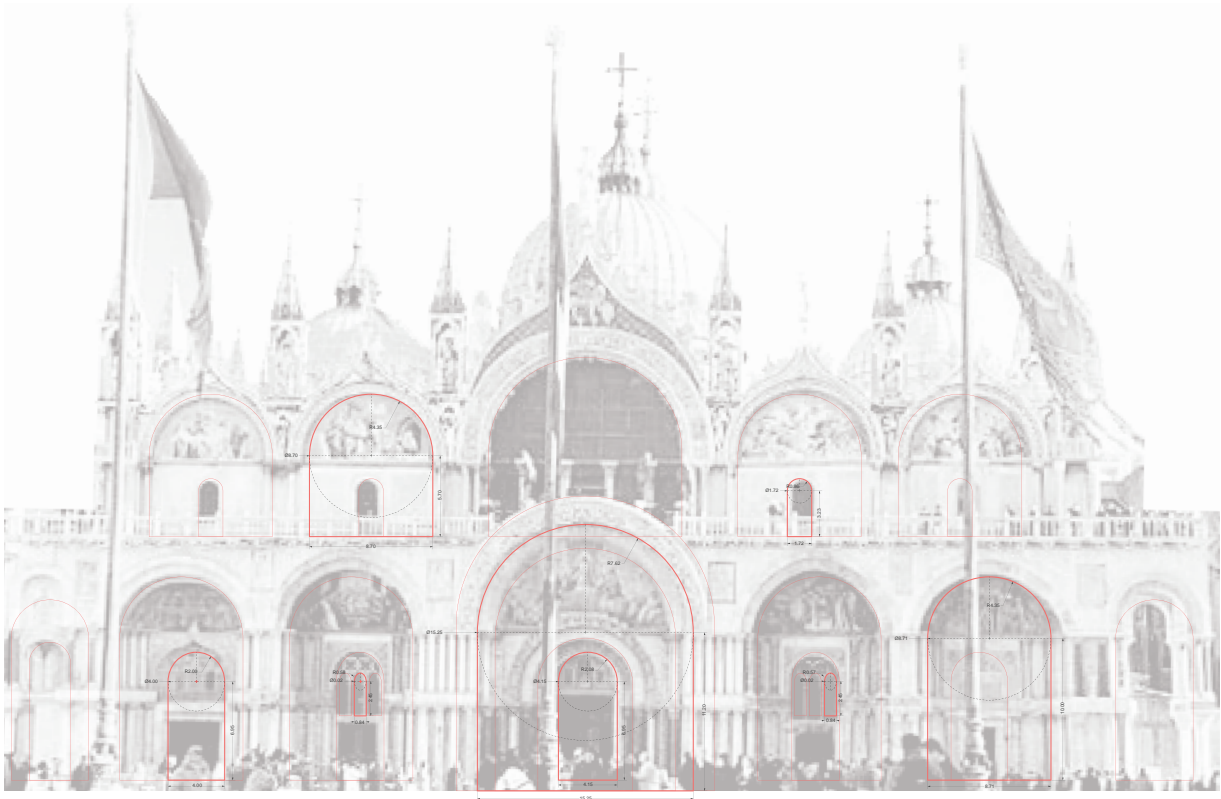


The logic behind the monument re-establishes rules of formalizing architecture in conversation with architecture history and the city's current volume of trash production.

The arches reflect back to the arches of St. Mark's basilica, such as the plazas and open inhabitable space resonate to the public ground all throughout Venice.



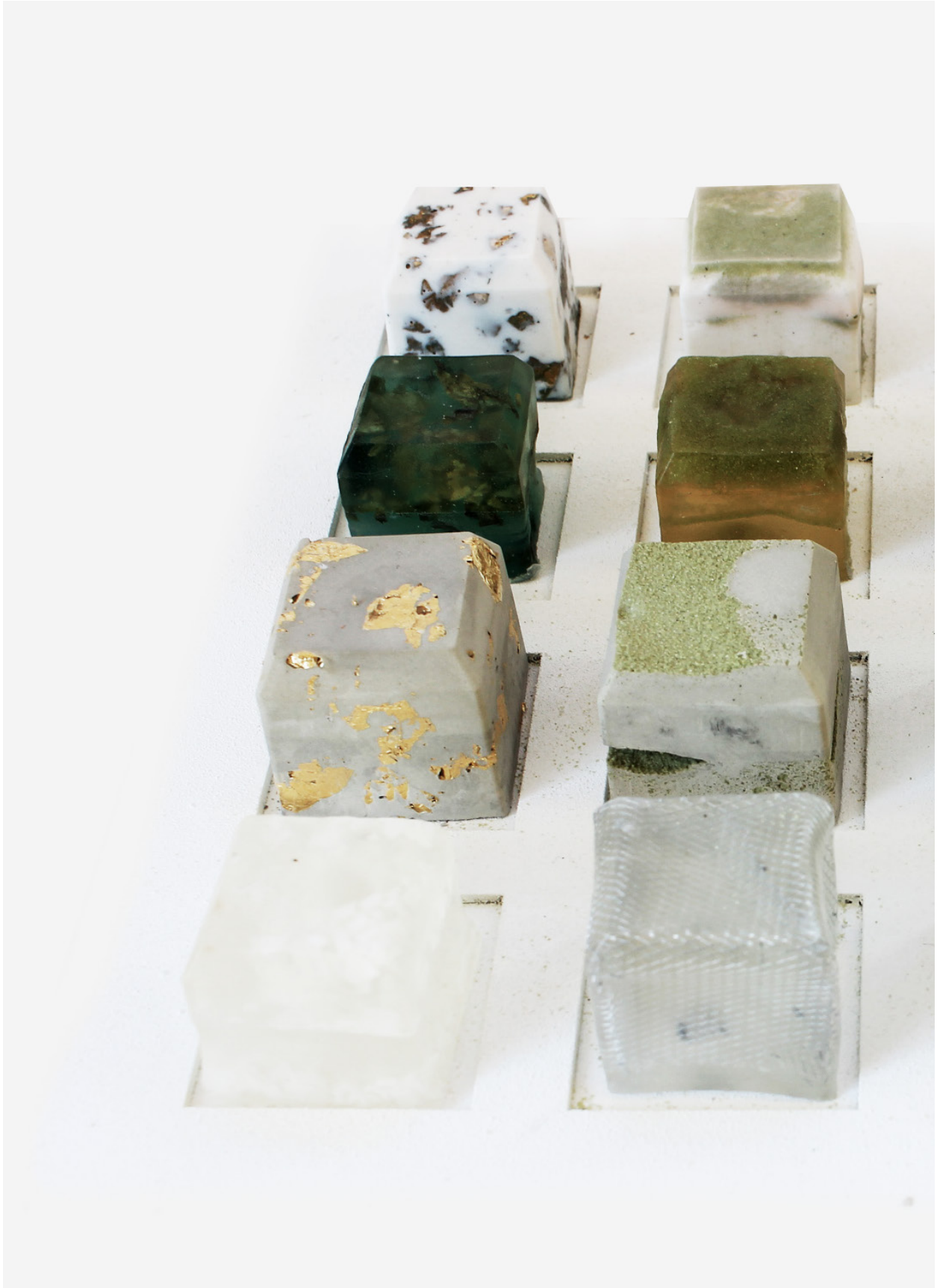






With materials lasting between 50-600 years to decompose, can we reevaluate a new building material that encapsulates the essence of the cultural phenomena, while outlasting its predecessors.









rubber and gravel as textures





fine particles as opportunities for apertures





metal as an aesthetic



perforated and corrugated materials as apertures



While the city of Venice will continue to  
experience a turbulence in flooding and  
water tides, our waste will remain,









conserved as a new building material,  
where waste becomes monumental through  
its production and its restoration -



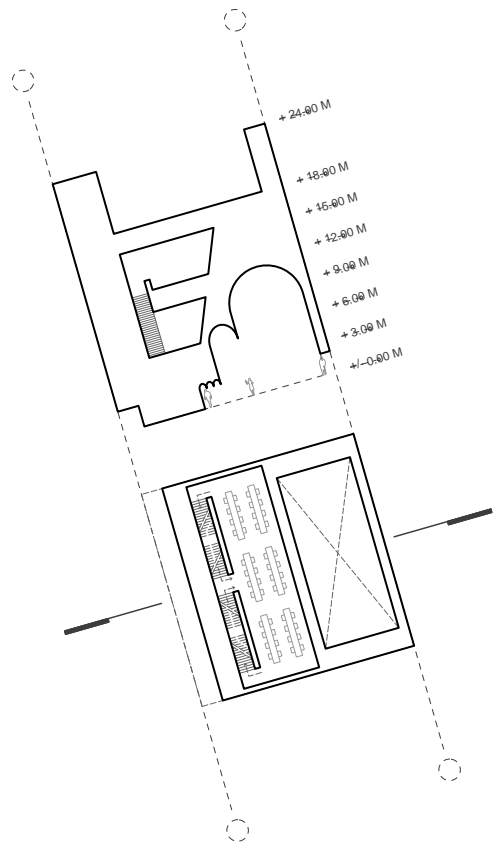
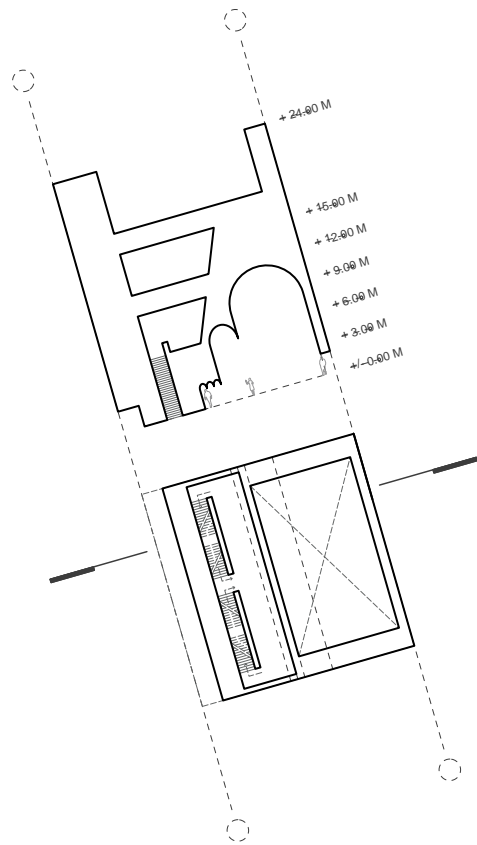
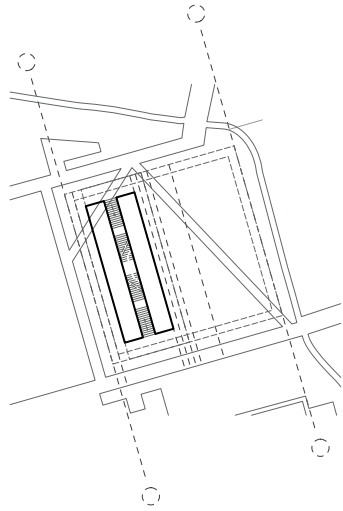


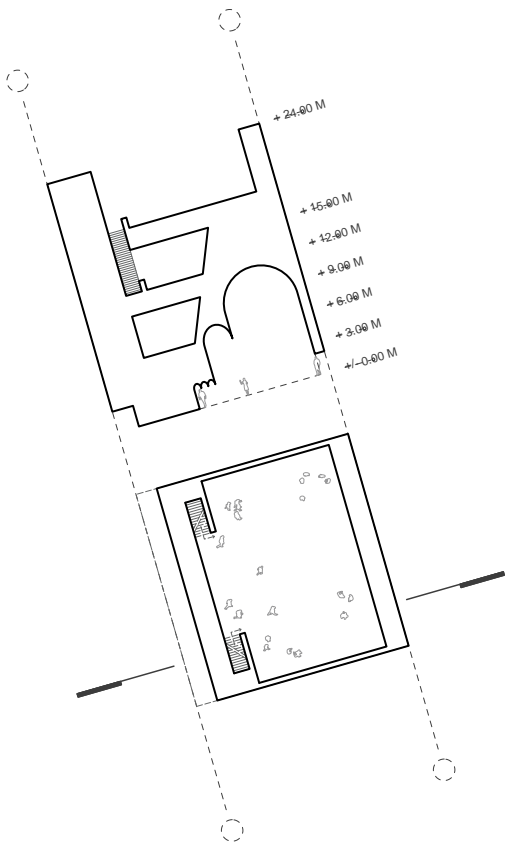
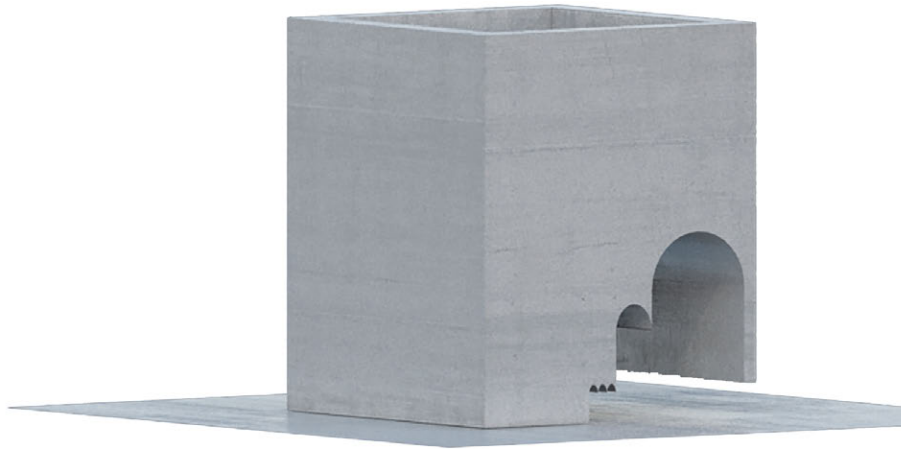


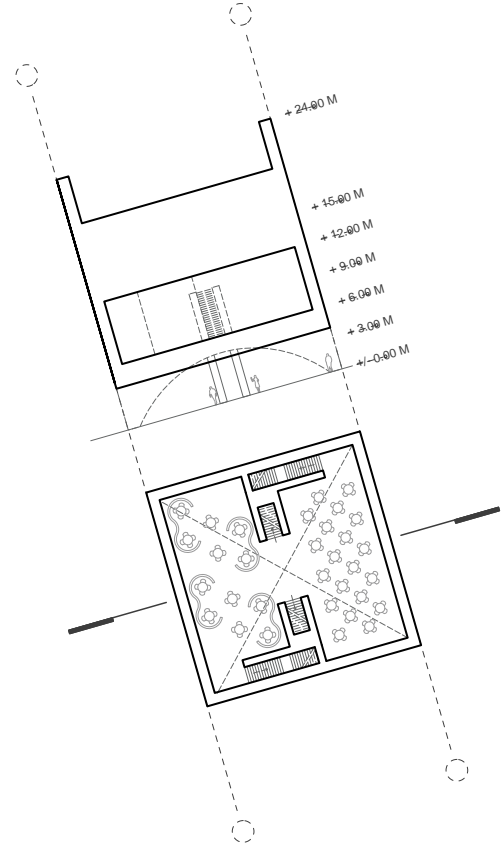
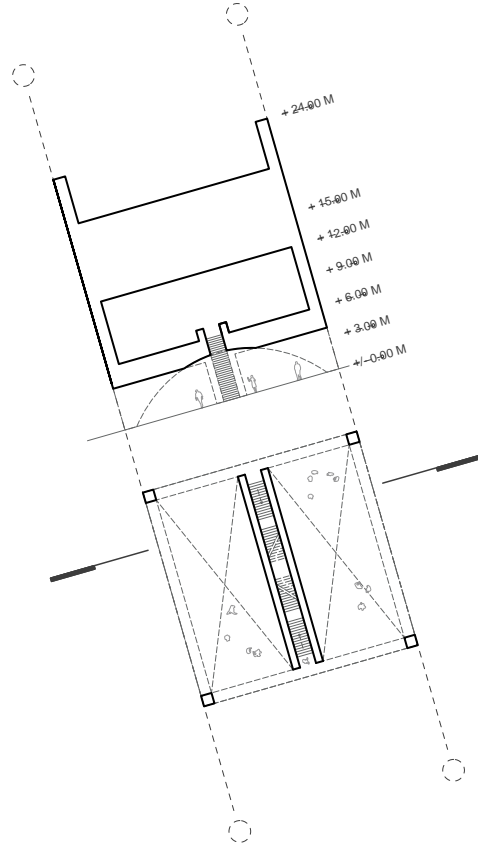
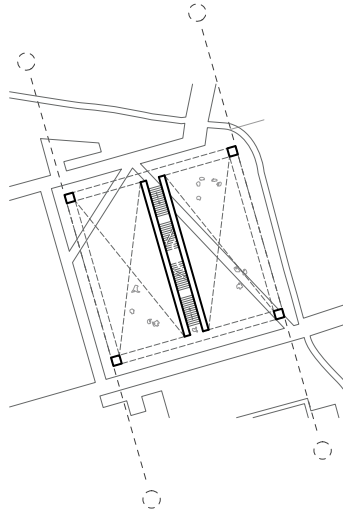


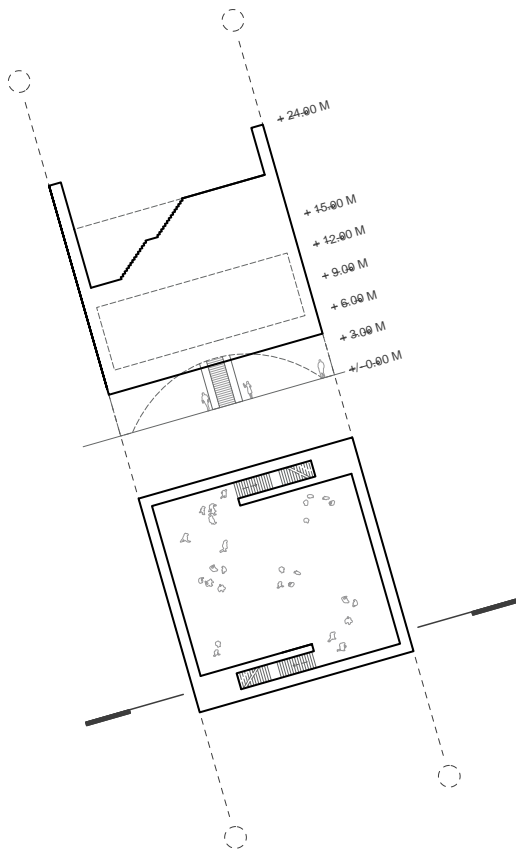
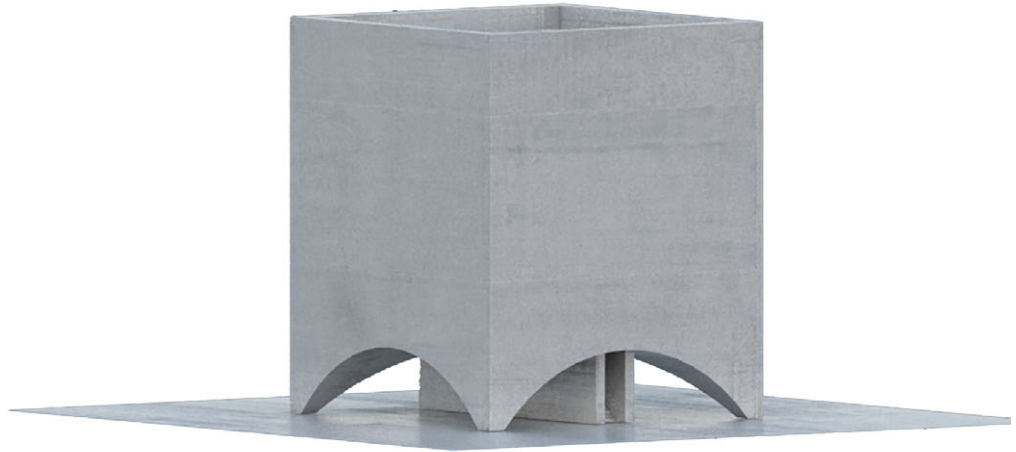
standing as a beacon of our Anthropocene,  
along the absent monuments where the story  
originated.

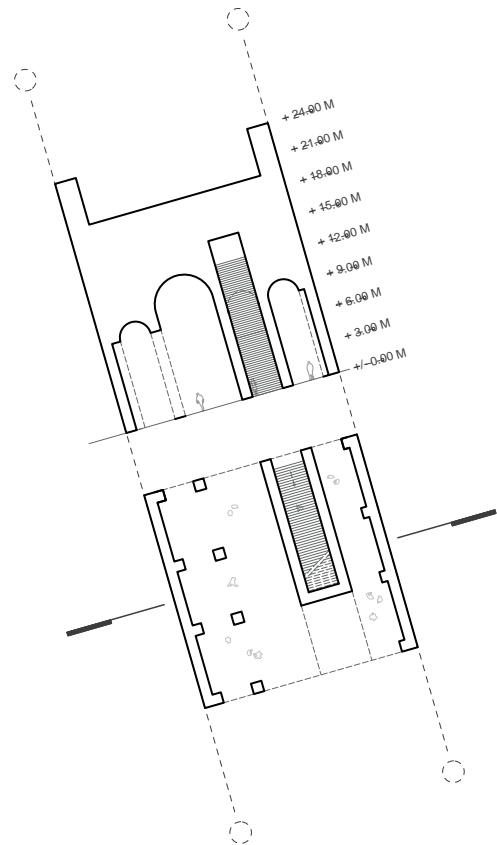
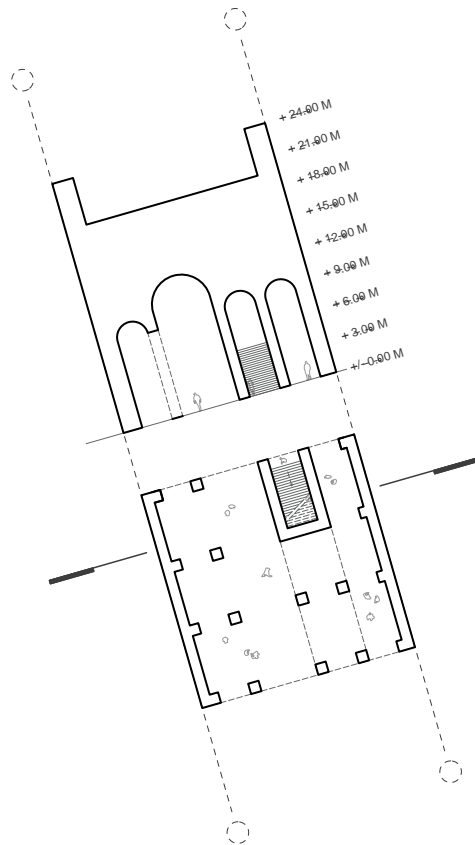
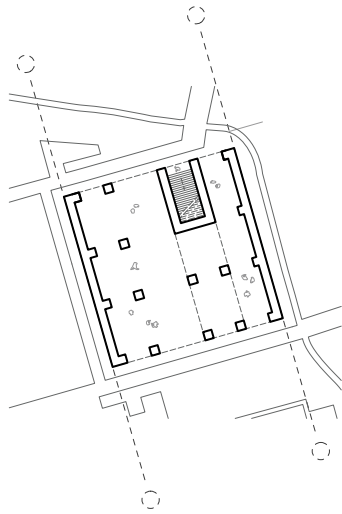




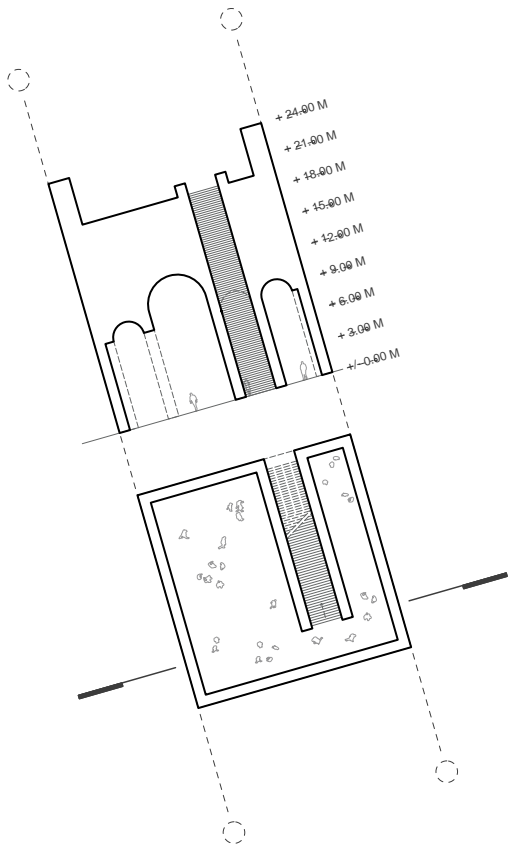
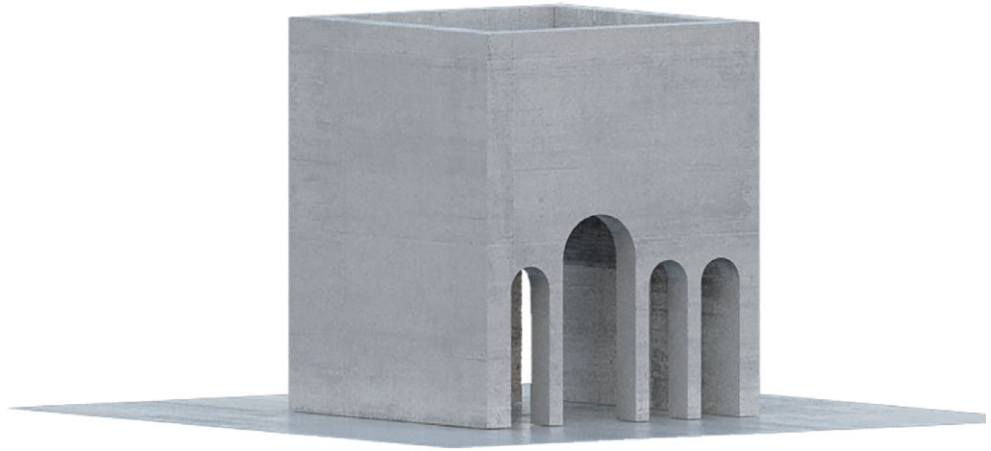


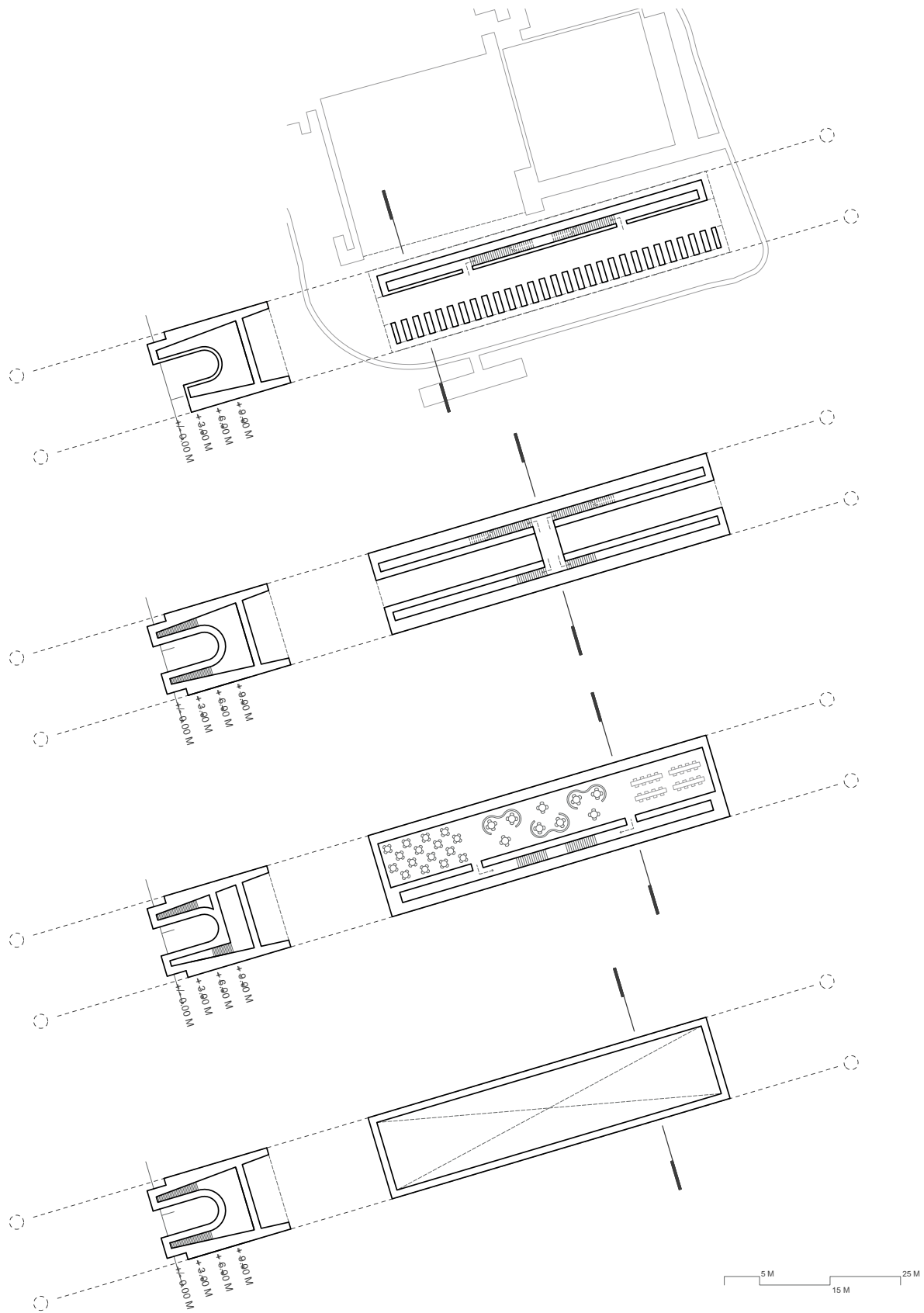














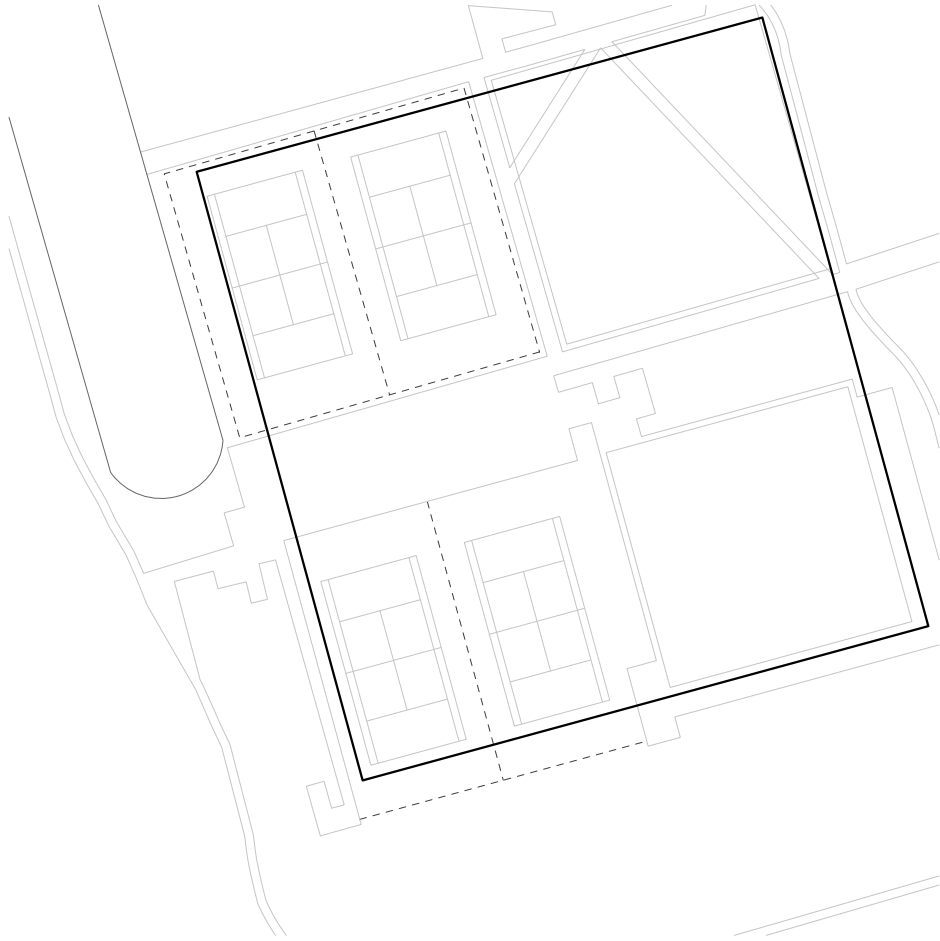
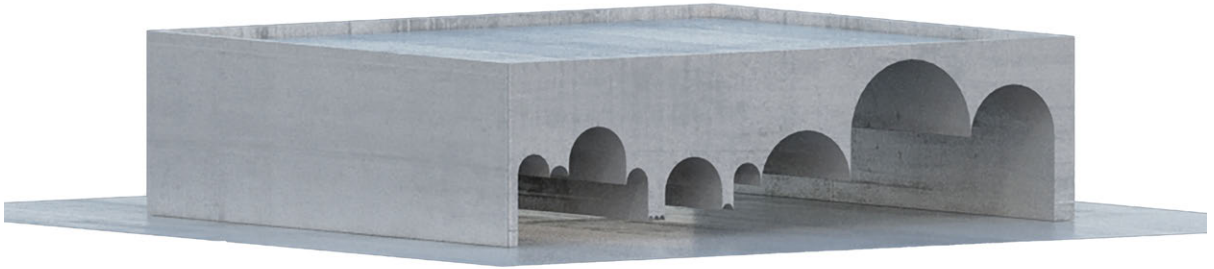


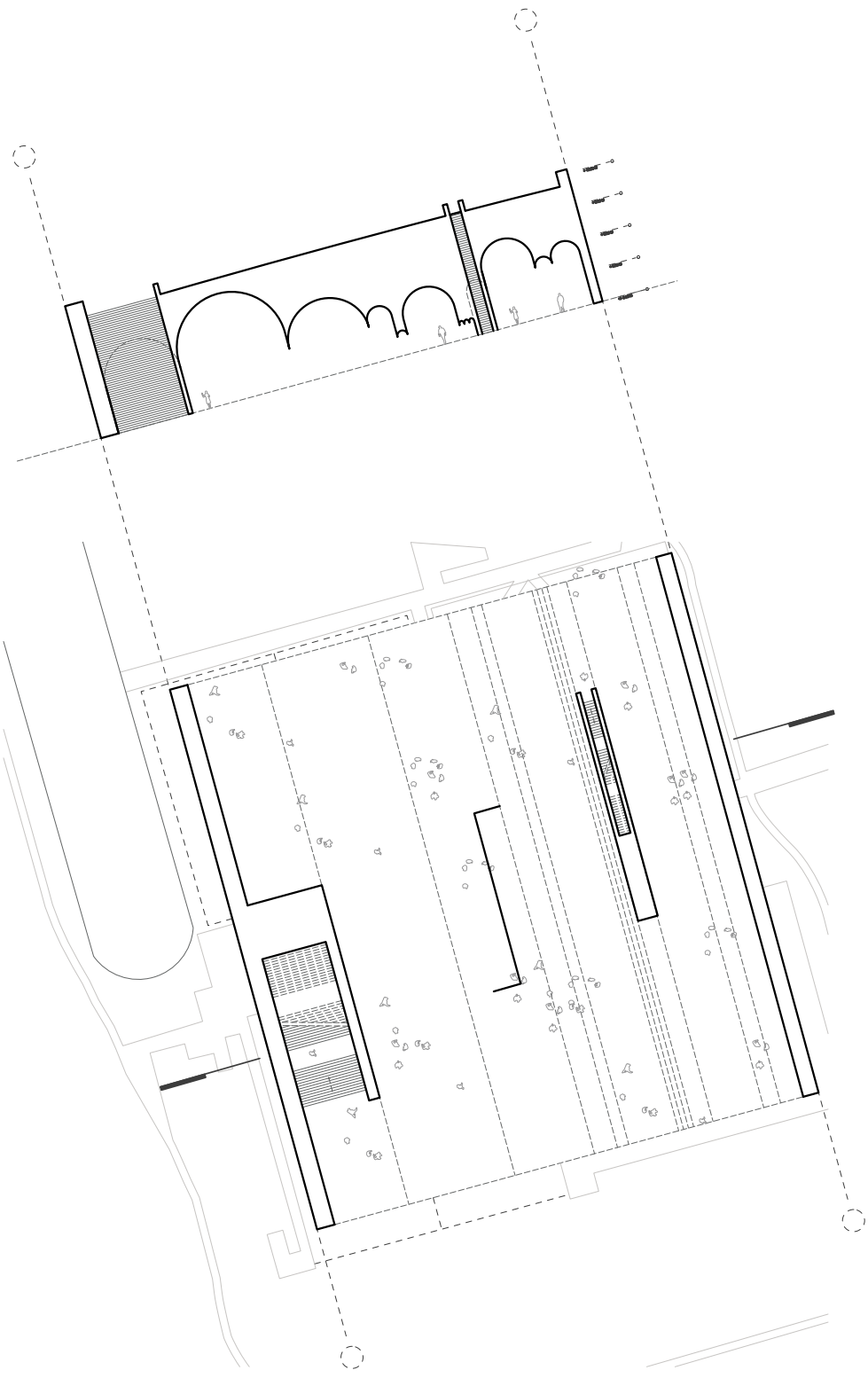






larger scale alternative





It is oriented toward another, much wetter, and perhaps less human filled future.







# Appendix



*final presentation photo by Cristina Solis*





*final presentation photo by Cristina Solis*







*final presentation photo by Demetra Sklaviadis*



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